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**COLOUR, CLASS AND GENDER IN POST-EMANCIPATION ST.
VINCENT,**

1834-1884

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Summary.

This thesis examines the experiences of the inhabitants of St. Vincent during the first fifty years of freedom. It examines social changes, work opportunities and areas of conflicts that developed during the period. It also details the effects of the declining economy on the islanders. The main subjects of the thesis are the agricultural labourers who were freed from slavery. It investigates their working lives, their attempts to achieve independent status as freeholders and their family and religious experiences. It also examines the changing attitudes towards them that were held by the planter class, the clergy and colonial officials, and how these views influenced the formation of a free society. In particular, the thesis investigates how perspectives of race, class and gender differed within the island, and how these divergencies created hostilities between different social groups often leading to unrest.

While the main focus of the thesis is St. Vincent, it also compares conditions in St. Vincent with other Caribbean islands and Britain. This has helped illustrate how some local conditions, such as the lack of available land, ineffective plantation management and economic factors, reduced the opportunities for the freed people of St. Vincent. However, it also illustrates a commonality of experiences among the poor in both the Caribbean and Britain. It illustrates how the lives of the poor in the Caribbean were often restricted by the same class and gender biases experienced in Britain, as well as by racial prejudices held by the ruling authorities.

The thesis relies on a variety of source material. Most of the primary sources were official Colonial Office dispatches, newspapers and Wesleyan missionary letters and reports. Throughout the thesis, I have questioned the motivations of the writers of these documents and interpreted the discourses they employed. I have also attempted to place the findings of my research within current debates among Caribbean historians of the post-emancipation period to illustrate the importance of further gender analysis and research.

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Abbreviations

S.V.A.	St. Vincent Archives
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Papers
<u>PP</u>	Parliamentary Papers
CO	Public Records Office, Colonial Office Papers
T	Public Records Office, Treasury Papers

A Map Of St. VINCENT AD 1853

V



This thesis will examine how issues of colour, class and gender affected the formation of free society in St. Vincent, a small Windward island in the British Caribbean. This is primarily a history of the poor. After the abolition of slavery the majority of the population in St. Vincent were agricultural labourers and this thesis is concerned with their lives and aspirations. I will also explore experiences of urban dwellers and discuss the discordance between various class and colour groups as the island's inhabitants struggled to control their own and others' destinies.

St. Vincent has been selected as the focus of this study for several reasons. It has been generally neglected by other historians who have tended to concentrate their research on Jamaica and to a lesser extent Trinidad, British Guiana and Barbados. Notable exceptions to this are Woodville Marshall, whose studies on the post-emancipation period in the Windward islands have proved invaluable to this thesis, and Bernard Marshall and Adrian Fraser, whose work on the early slave period and late nineteenth-century St. Vincent have provided useful background information. However, none of these historians has analysed gender issues within their work, and this study attempts to fill that gap.(1)

(1) Woodville Marshall: 'The Social and Economic Development of the Windward Islands, 1838-1865' (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1964); idem, (ed.), The Coulthurst Journal: Journal of a Special Magistrate in the Islands of Barbados and St. Vincent, July 1835-September 1838 (New York, 1977); idem, 'Apprenticeship and Labour Relations in the Windward Islands', in David Richardson (ed.), Abolition and its

Nineteenth-century St. Vincent had several unique factors which generate useful comparisons with studies from other islands. By the time that slavery was abolished, the island was under-populated and there were large areas of uncultivated land. However, unlike islands with similar demographic conditions, such as Jamaica and Grenada, few freed slaves in St. Vincent were able to acquire freehold properties. In addition, unemployment became rife and many Vincentians were forced to migrate to Trinidad, British Guiana and later the Dutch islands as well as Cuba and Panama in search of work. Moreover, St. Vincent plantations were owned primarily by absentee proprietors, and many of the managers who controlled both the estates and the local legislature were reluctant to relinquish any power. This resulted in a series of disputes during the post-emancipation period, and finally, after the 1862 protests, economic depression and extreme hardship.

The period covered in this study, from 1834 to 1884, saw several radical changes in the economic and social structures of the island. Slavery was replaced first by a period of apprenticeship and then by free labour. New communities were formed and more people had access to

Aftermath: The Historical Context, 1790-1916 (London, 1985), pp. 203-220; Bernard Marshall: 'Society and Economy in the British Windward Islands, 1763-1823' (PhD thesis, University of the West Indies, 1972); idem, 'Social Stratification of the Free Coloureds in the Slave Societies of the British Windward Islands', Social and Economic Studies, 36, no. 1 (1982), pp.1-39; Adrian Fraser: 'Development of a Peasantry in St. Vincent, 1846-1912' (M.Phil, University of the West Indies, 1980); idem, 'Peasants and Agricultural Labourers in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 1899-1951' (PhD thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1986).

religious and educational bodies. The political framework also changed and St. Vincent became a Crown colony in 1878. This study describes the islands' descent into economic ruin, which the 1884 Parliamentary Select Committee highlighted in its investigation into the collapse of the sugar industries in the West Indies. While this thesis will not attempt to analyse the causes of the economic collapse, it will emphasise the results that this downfall had on Vincentian men, women and children.

Much of the source material for this study was located in Colonial Office dispatches, newspaper reports, missionary letters and travel accounts. Therefore, the vast majority of incidents were described by white, middle-class men. This limits the thesis, as the writers' selection of the occurrences that they recorded and the bias that they put on certain episodes ensure that many events were either unrecorded or mis-represented. This is particularly noticeable when dealing with conflicts between managers and labourers. Therefore, I have attempted in some instances to analyse the discourses used rather than the events that they describe. On the whole, the thoughts of the labouring population went unrecorded. They can sometimes be inferred by the labourers' actions, and I have incorporated into this thesis what Thomas Holt describes as 'stories of ordinary people' to illustrate the diverse and conflicting struggles of the poor to achieve some dignity within their lives.(2)

(2) Thomas Holt, The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938 (Baltimore, 1992), p. xxviii.

In addition, I have included the few petitions and letters claiming to be from the African-Caribbean population, which can be found in full in the appendix.

Among the greatest contentions was the disparity between the philosophies of the ruling authorities and those of the labouring poor. Throughout the period studied, different class interests conflicted with each other, ensuring that frictions remained constant between the separate social groups. Freed labourers, in particular, attempted to achieve social conditions which were well beyond the scope of the liberal philosophies that had encouraged abolition and completely antipathetic to the administration of a plantation society.

The three major themes in this thesis, colour, class and gender, are interwoven and affected the lives and aspirations of all inhabitants. Throughout the British West Indies, issues of colour or 'race' cannot be separated from issues of class and economic status. Individuals forged alliances with people of similar economic backgrounds but different racial heritages on some occasions, while on other occasions, colour lines superseded class lines. This thesis will explore how these different allegiances affected society and often resulted in turbulent and violent events.

I have experienced difficulties in combining satisfactorily the terminology of the nineteenth century with present-day usage. Nineteenth-century observers and officials used the terms 'black', 'coloured' and 'white' to differentiate between people of purely African descent, those of mixed African and European heritage and people with

only European ancestry. While the modern terms 'African-Caribbean' and 'European' can replace the nineteenth-century's black and white, the term 'coloured' is not so easily substituted. The terms 'non-white' and 'African-Caribbean' do not help distinguish between people with and those without any European parentage, and in the nineteenth century Caribbean, this was a crucial factor in determining an individual's class and social position. Therefore, despite its present day connotations, I have used the term coloured to encompass its nineteenth-century usage when I refer to people of mixed African and European lineage.

Descriptions of different social classes are also problematical. The notions of an upper, middle and lower class do not encompass all the different strata of nineteenth-century St. Vincent, and the nineteenth-century usages of terms such as upper class and the lower orders are vague. E.P. Thompson described class as 'a fluency which evades analysis if we attempt to stop it dead at any given moment and anatomize its structures'. He further warned that 'we cannot understand class unless we see it as a social and cultural formation arising from processes which can only be studied as they work themselves out over a considerable historical period'.⁽³⁾ Class structures in the post-emancipation period arose out of those which developed during the slavery era, as well as those that evolved from metropolitan influences. In addition, creole idiosyncrasies further modified Caribbean notions of class. In the

(3) E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (2nd. edn, London, 1968), pp. 9, 11.

nineteenth-century Caribbean, class and colour were closely intertwined and notions of respectability often predisposed social position as much as economic factors. The small population and the insignificant number of resident proprietors also influenced social groups. Therefore, the 'elite' class in St. Vincent included many members of the bourgeoisie, such as merchants, higher ranking civil servants and professionals. Although members of this elite group were predominantly European, there were some coloured families with similar economic and professional attributes. Throughout the period covered in this study, the coloured elite attempted to secure their membership among the most influential and powerful. However, as Bridget Brereton argued for Trinidad, educated black and coloured families in St. Vincent also advocated racial consciousness and rejected notions of white superiority.(4)

At the bottom of the social ladder were the under-employed and unemployed and the homeless. This section of the community, referred to by Karl Marx as the 'dangerous class', were the main victims of the economic decline in the island.(5) Within the towns they were unskilled, and as urban expansion slowed down, they were left with little hope of a regular income. People from this social group often resorted to crime or begging as there was no welfare system

(4) Bridget Brereton, 'The Development of a Black Identity: The Black Middle Class of Trinidad in the late Nineteenth Century', in Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (eds.), Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present (Kingston, 1993), p. 274.

(5) Karl Marx, The Communist Manifesto 1888, ed. by A.J.P. Taylor, (London, 1967), p. 92.

in the island. Occasionally, the elderly or diseased died on the back streets of the towns. In the rural areas, the unemployed were often elderly or disabled. However, as the plantations declined and more indentured labourers from Africa, Madeira and India worked on the estates, many able-bodied men and women faced irregular work and poverty.

Between these two groups were the mass of people who worked as semi-skilled artisans, traders, domestics or clerks within the towns or were small holders or lease holders in rural areas. These were the working class and petit bourgeoisie. However, they were not always a cohesive group. Skin colour, religious affiliation and property ownership divided the 'respectable' from the 'masses'. Susan Lowes' categories of first and second middle class are useful descriptors for these people. The first middle class were often property holders with access to educational facilities. The second middle class lived more precariously and had to struggle to earn a living.(6)

On the estates, however, social groups were divided among the white and occasionally coloured estate managers, the predominantly black and male superintendents and skilled labourers, village residents who worked the estates as 'strangers', resident labourers and finally indentured labourers. Loyalties between these different groups were constantly shifting. Thus, while the divide between management and labourers remained constant, superintendents

(6) Susan Lowes, 'The Peculiar Class: The Formation and Reformation of the Middle Class in Antigua, West Indies, 1834-1940' (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1994), pp. 7-8, 145, 175.

did not always share the same allegiances, village residents and estate labourers occasionally came into conflict, and creoles sometimes assisted indentured labourers and at other times opposed them.

Joan Scott has suggested that gender analysis should incorporate not studies of great women, but an evaluation of the relations between sexes. She recommends that historians should question what is at stake when gender issues are raised publicly; how people define and reinforce understandings of gender roles; what are the relationships between the law about women and the power of the state; why women are largely invisible as historical figures; and how social institutions incorporate gender into their organisations.(7) Teresita Martínez Vergne has further highlighted the importance of focussing on kinship relationships and the organisation of the household within post-emancipation studies in order to fully interpret gender issues.(8) In addition, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn has emphasised the importance of incorporating African-feminist theories of female collective identity and leadership within any analysis of women of the African diaspora.(9)

(7) Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York, 1988), pp. 49-50.

(8) Teresita Martínez Vergne, 'The Liberation of Women in the Caribbean: Research Perspectives for the Study of Gender Relations in the Post-Emancipation Period', Caribbean Studies, Vol. 27, no. 1-2, (1994), pp. 6-7.

(9) Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, 'Through an African-Feminist Theoretical Lens: Viewing Caribbean Women's History Cross-Culturally', in Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton, Barbara Bailey (eds.) Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective (Kingston, 1995), pp. 4-5.

Gender analysis was largely neglected in earlier studies of post-emancipation societies. Caribbean historians such as Douglas Hall, William Green, Alan Adamson, Donald Wood and Claude Levy, who, in the 1960s and 1970s, wrote very differing accounts of post-emancipation society, all largely neglected the different contributions and experiences of men and women.(10) However, in the 1980s, several studies on slave women by historians such as Lucille Mathurin, Barbara Bush, Marietta Morrissey, Rhoda Reddock and Hilary Beckles revealed the very different experiences that women suffered within the plantations, carrying what Bush has described as 'a double burden'.(11) This work has been further complemented by studies on the histories of indentured Indian women in Jamaica and Trinidad by, for example, Verene Shepherd, Patricia Mohammed and

(10) Alan Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904 (Yale University Press, 1972); Douglas Hall: Five of the Leewards, 1834-1870 (St. Laurence, Barbados, 1971); idem, Free Jamaica, 1838-1865. An Economic History (Yale University Press, 1959); William A. Green, British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment 1830-1865 (Oxford, 1976); Claude Levy, Emancipation, Sugar and Federalism: Barbados and the West Indies, 1838-1876 (University of Florida, 1980); Donald Wood, Trinidad in Transition: The Years After Slavery (London, 1968)

(11) Barbara Bush, Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838 (London, 1990); Hilary McD Beckles, Natural Rebels: a Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados (London, 1989); Rhoda Reddock, 'Women and Slavery in the Caribbean: a Feminist Perspective', Latin American Perspectives, Issue 44, Vol. 12, no. 1 (Winter 1985), pp. 63-80; Lucille Mathurin Mair, 'Women Field Workers in Jamaica during Slavery', The Elsa Goveia Memorial Lecture, May 14 1986, (Kingston, 1986); Marietta Morrissey, Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean (Kansas University Press, 1989).

Rhoda Reddock.(12) Thomas Holt and Swithin Wilmot have also incorporated some analysis of gender within their studies on post-emancipation society in Jamaica.(13) Catherine Hall undertook a very comprehensive study of Victorian attitudes towards class, gender and race. This study has provided an insight into the ideas and motivations of missionaries, Colonial authorities and the wider British public, which influenced their decisions and actions when dealing with the Caribbean.(14) This thesis seeks to answer some of the questions posed by Scott, and to give a better understanding of the lives of men and women in St. Vincent and the wider Caribbean.

Gender roles and expectations differed between the classes in St. Vincent. The elite considered that the behaviour of the sexes was an indication of respectability. This was a view that echoed Victorian English attitudes. Masculinity was equated with authority, physical bravery and responsibility. Men were expected to prove their manliness

(12) Verene Shepherd, 'Gender, Migration, and Settlement: The Indentureship and Post-Indentureship Experience of Indian Females in Jamaica, 1845-1943', in Shepherd, et al (eds.), Engendering History pp. 233-257; Patricia Mohammed, 'Writing Gender into History: The Negotiations of Gender Relations among Indian Men and Women in Post-Indenture Trinidad Society, 1917-47', in *ibid*, pp. 20-47; Rhoda Reddock, Women, Labour and Politics in Trinidad and Tobago: A History (London, 1994).

(13) Holt, The Problem of Freedom pp. 63-64, 152, 170-171; Swithin Wilmot, 'Females of Abandoned Character'? Women and Protest in Jamaica, 1838-65', in Shepherd et al (eds.), Engendering History pp. 279-295.

(14) Catherine Hall: 'White Visions, Black Lives: The Free Villages of Jamaica', History Workshop Journal, No. 36, (Autumn, 1993), pp. 100-133; *idem*, White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism in History (Cambridge, 1992).

through participation in the militia and through protecting and controlling female and child members of the family.

British officials occasionally disparaged West Indian males for their lack of manliness when rioting broke out among the masses and local people requested British troops. After the Morant Bay rebellion, British authorities sought to train the local militia groups to ensure that a similar event could be quickly suppressed.

Manliness was not an attribute that the ruling elite applied to the poor. Labouring men were sometimes portrayed in terms of their physical strength, but Europeans ascribed this to brutishness, rather than masculinity. The authorities described lower class African-Caribbean men who rebelled and fought against them as cowardly. Despite the fact that many of these men (and the women and children who protested alongside them) were unarmed and faced soldiers with firearms, these acts of defiance were never described as manly or bold. This was partly because English society had developed a quasi-scientific racism, which equated Northern Europeans with racial superiority. Bizarre theories, based on skull and genital measurements and autopsy reports abounded and influenced the attitudes of many of the ruling elite.⁽¹⁵⁾ Attitudes of class solidarity were also important, and the wealthy in England used similar reasoning to describe violent protests among the poor as acts of cowardice. Because middle-class European men

(15) Douglas A. Lorimer, Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century (Leicester University Press, 1978), pp. 137-139; Catherine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race (London, 1974), pp. 9-19.

considered manliness as the highest characteristic of a civilised society, they could not apply it to those they considered to be at the bottom of the social scale.

Women from the elite were the most invisible historically. Collectively, they formed committees to raise money for church funds. They also attended parties and public ceremonies and were occasionally praised for their elegance or skilled craft work in condescending newspaper reports. Otherwise, their activities and thoughts were largely unrecorded. It was very rare for any women of this class to rebel against society. In one case recorded of this happening in St. Vincent, the woman was patronised and protected against what was perceived as her waywardness. An illustration of how men expected women of this class to behave is found in a letter written to The Witness in 1880. The author complained that three young women, who thought of themselves as 'the Upper Ten', drove through George Town singing 'Home Sweet Home' very loudly. The women were no doubt expressing their homesickness and boredom, but the author mockingly suggested that they were members of a travelling musical troupe. Their actions, in his eyes, were not those of respectable young ladies.⁽¹⁶⁾ The invisibility of middle-class women for historians is partly a result of the restricted and confined lives that many middle-class women endured but also because the types of documents which have survived were primarily written by white males. There

(16) The St. Vincent Guardian and Government Gazette, 22 April 1865, 29 April 1865; The Witness, 24 June 1880. See also, chapter eight.

are very few accounts written by women, especially in the post-emancipation period. However, those that do survive often put more emphasis on female concerns and women's lives in general.(17)

More women from the poorer classes were visible because of their non-conformity. These women, who rioted on the streets or complained vociferously when they were abused or exploited, acted in a manner that most middle-class European men found threatening and offensive. The theories that had denied that black males were manly also described black women as far removed from feminine norms. Descriptions of African and Caribbean women concentrated on women who had physical strength. Images of black women in the middle of the century described muscular and sturdy figures, which were the antithesis of Victorian standards of female beauty. Author and traveller Charles Kingsley, for example, declared that black women were 'on a more thorough footing of equality with the men than the women of any white race'. This he attributed to their physical strength: 'the black women of the West Indies would be as formidable, cutlass in hand, as the men'. However, Victorian theories of civilisation also incorporated the belief that fewer differences between men and women, indicated less civilised societies. In fact, Kingsley suggested that African-Caribbeans would never achieve civilisation until the women

(17) Bridget Brereton, 'Text, Testimony and Gender: The Examination of some Texts by Women on the English Speaking Caribbean from the 1770s to the 1920s', in Shepherd et al (eds.), Engendering History p. 90.

were forced, through financial dependency, to marry.(18) This selected image of African-Caribbean women was radically different from the feeble and prostrate figures of slave women portrayed by abolitionists to encourage support of their movement.(19) While humanitarians sought to command feelings of empathy and identification from middle-class English women, later travellers sought to distance themselves and their country-women from Africans and African-Caribbeans. This ensured that black women in the Caribbean received neither the paternal protection offered to middle-class white women, nor the access to economic advancement and skills available to men.

Historians have placed increasing emphasis on understanding the 'meaning of freedom' for ex-slaves.(20) There has been a general consensus that freed slaves wanted greater independence. Michael Craton, for example, suggested 'freedom meant being free to be small farmers, working for the plantations, if at all, only for wages and on their own terms. They wanted to live in family units, to have ready access to land of their own, and to be free to develop their own culture, particularly their own

(18) Charles Kingsley, At Last a Christmas in the West Indies (2 Vols. London, 1871), Vol. 1, pp. 50-51.

(19) See for example, the illustrations in Bush, Slave Women pp. 41, 43, 54, 59.

(20) Rebecca Scott, 'Exploring the Meaning of Freedom: Post-Emancipation Societies in Comparative Perspective', Hispanic American Historical Review, Vol. 68, no. 3 (1988), pp. 407-428; See also the articles in Frank McGlynn and Seymour Drescher (eds.), The Meaning of Freedom: Economics, Politics, and Culture after Slavery (Pittsburgh, 1992).

syncretized religion'.(21) Within this thesis, I have examined how restrictions based on rigid colour, class and gender barriers, affected the lives of Vincentian men and women, and how people struggled to overcome some of these barriers, and accommodated others. The thesis maintains that gender issues were central to the reformation of society because men and women adopted their own postures and rejected many standards which the authorities and missionaries attempted to impose on them. However, it also argues that increased poverty eroded many of the achievements of the first generation of freed slaves, as migration, unemployment and lack of freeholds forced many families to separate and pushed women back into working on the estates and sending their children out to work.

Summary of Chapters.

The first chapter investigates St. Vincent in the years leading up to the abolition of slavery. It discusses the aspirations that slaves, slave owners, colonial authorities and abolitionists had for a free society and how these aspirations would inevitably lead to conflict.

The second chapter concentrates on the apprenticeship period. It reveals how attitudes of planters resulted in a growing discord between management and labourers on estates. Swithin Wilmot and Douglas Hall have both suggested that apprenticeship had two opposing interpretations. Planters

(21) Michael Craton, 'Slave Culture, Resistance and the Achievement of Emancipation in the British West Indies, 1783-1838', in James Walvin (ed.), Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846 (London, 1982), p. 119.

saw it as additional compensation so they could 'squeeze the last out of compulsory labour'. British government officials, on the other hand, expected it to be a period of transition as planters and slaves adjusted to new working regulations.(22) The actions of the labourers themselves reveal a third interpretation of apprenticeship. To them it was a disappointment. They questioned its legality, and scorned the notions that they needed training. As Gad Heuman has illustrated, labourers also sometimes demonstrated their opposition to the scheme violently and forcefully.(23)

In his study of apprenticeship in Jamaica, Douglas Hall described the actions of planters towards apprentices as 'annoyances'. However, this study seeks to demonstrate that planter antagonism had more serious consequences by highlighting instances when planters reacted against apprenticeship by inflicting heavy burdens specifically on women labourers and how women reacted to them. The apprenticeship period in St. Vincent illustrated both the deficiencies of the scheme and the inadequacies of the protection afforded to the ex-slaves. It also revealed the tensions that existed between planters and labourers as

(22) Swithin Wilmot, '"Not Full Free" The Ex-slaves and the Apprenticeship System in Jamaica, 1834-1838', Jamaica Journal, 17, (August-October 1984), p. 2; Douglas Hall, 'The Apprenticeship Period in Jamaica, 1834-1838', Caribbean Quarterly, 3, (December 1953), p. 142.

(23) Gad Heuman, 'Riots and Resistance in the Caribbean at the Moment of Freedom', Paper presented to the ACH conference, Surinam, 1998.

labourers took control over their families and established new parental roles.

Chapters three, four and five concentrate on the livelihood of rural labourers. Nigel Bolland has contended that freedom should be judged, not by the survival of the plantations, but by the survival and improved living conditions of the freed slaves. He stated that the post-emancipation period should be examined as 'an aspect of the transformation of systems of domination'. William Green has criticised Bolland's dialectic approach to Caribbean society, claiming that it ignores the wider international picture, specifically the influence of British officials and disregards the central importance of the sugar economy to the islands as a whole.(24) In chapter three, I explore the experiences of resident estate workers, and how the economic collapse of the island contributed to the poverty of many rural inhabitants. I argue that the continued domination of land by estate owners, and the attempts by their managers to reduce the independence and living standards of creole workers were directly responsible for the tensions and unrest in the island. The chapter looks into working and living conditions on the estates and how these gradually deteriorated during the century. It particularly examines

(24) O. Nigel Bolland, 'Systems of Domination After Slavery: The Control of Land and Labour in the British West Indies', in Beckles and Shepherd (eds.), Caribbean Freedom pp. 107-108; Part of the debate between the two scholars can be found in William Green, 'The Creolisation of Caribbean History: The Emancipation Era and a Critique of Dialectical Analysis', in Beckles and Shepherd (eds.), Caribbean Freedom pp. 28-40; O. Nigel Bolland, 'The Politics of Freedom in the British Caribbean', in McGlynn and Drescher (eds.), The Meaning of Freedom pp. 113-146.

the efforts of men and women on the estates to improve their lives and reorganise their domestic responsibilities.

In the fourth chapter, I examine the withdrawal of labour from the estates, and, specifically, look at how men and women underwent different experiences and had different opportunities to achieve independence from estate work. This chapter discusses the 'push-pull' theories of post-emancipation historians, and argues that an understanding of the flight from the estates cannot be fully realised without incorporating an analysis of gender. This chapter also deals with the formation of free villages and details how Vincentians were able to build new communities, despite the high costs of land and lack of assistance from outside agencies.

Chapter five details the lives of immigrant labourers and the philosophies behind the recruitment of indentured labourers. It concentrates on the three largest groups of immigrants, from Madeira, India and Africa and looks at their employment conditions and experiences and their relations with other members of the society. It also suggests that the frequently harsh treatment of indentured labourers resulted from prevailing attitudes to race, class and gender. British officials and the mainly European estate managers defended the indenture and enforced labour of Africans, Southern Europeans and Indians because they believed in the superiority of the British and could distance themselves from those they considered to be different and inferior.

Chapter six discusses family issues, in particular attitudes to marriage and child-care. This chapter assesses the attitudes of European men towards their own and others' sexuality and their interpretations of African-Caribbean family life. Many historians have conceded that autonomy within the family was central to ex-slaves.(25) However, a detailed examination of family life and childhood in the nineteenth-century Caribbean is missing from Caribbean historiography. This chapter discusses the aspirations of ex-slaves as they attempted to re-structure their lives and provide education for their children. It examines attitudes to child labour and delineates the repercussions that poverty and reduced employment had on family stability.

Chapter seven examines religious influences in St. Vincent, and the conflicts between the Anglican and Methodist denominations as they struggled to exert an influence on the labouring class and impose their own moral standards. It also looks at the emergence of African-Caribbean centred Christianity. Religious autonomy was one means of resistance against class hierarchies. Abigail Bakan has described religion as a 'primary ideological arena of class struggle'.(26) Robert Stewart has also suggested that, while European-Christian sects attempted to impose

(25) See for example, Woodville Marshall, '"We be Wise to many more tings": Blacks' Hopes and Expectations of Emancipation', in Beckles and Shepherd, (eds.), Caribbean Freedom p. 17; Rebecca Scott, 'Former Slaves: Responses to Emancipation in Cuba', in *ibid*, p. 22 ; Matínez Vergne, 'The Liberation of Women' pp. 17-23.

(26) Abigail Bakan, Ideology and Class Conflict in Jamaica: The Politics of Rebellion (Montreal, 1990), p. 50.

social order, African-Christian sects 'prevented a despairing acceptance of the post-emancipation social order as pre-destined and unshakeable'.(27) Chapter seven also examines the importance of the Shaker sect in St. Vincent and reveals the emergence of the sect and its influence on the labouring population. It also discusses the antagonism that the sect provoked. It further describes the opportunities that this Church offered to men and women in terms of leadership, respect and political mobilisation.

Chapters eight and nine concentrate on Kingstown, the capital of St. Vincent. They examine the work and freehold opportunities available to men and women, the colour and class divisions within the town and the instances of civil unrest. Chapter nine also surveys the goals of urban protesters and discusses how issues of class, race and gender were invoked within these protests. It suggests that the aims and methods of urban rioters differed from rural protesters, and that the theories put forward by Eric Hobsbawm in his studies of nineteenth-century European town rioters provide a useful comparison with urban riots in the Caribbean.(28)

In the final chapter, the thesis examines rural protests. It details the early disputes as planters and labourers attempted to exert their demands. The chapter also describes the different roles that men and women

(27) Robert Stewart, Religion and Society in Post-Emancipation Jamaica (Knoxville, 1992), pp. 144-145.

(28) E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Manchester, 1959), pp. 109-122.

assumed during protests and concurs with Terborg-Penn that women's participation in riots and protests can be seen as a manifestation of African-feminism. The chapter recounts in detail the confrontation between labourers and the authorities that took place in 1862 in order to speculate on the motivations of the rioters and those that suppressed them. The protest culminated in the deaths of several protesters and the arrests of over one hundred men and women. The chapter also examines the aftermath of the riots and the increased feelings of alienation and resentment as well as the effects of poverty on labourers.

Rebecca Scott has recommended that studies on the post-emancipation period illustrate how ex-slaves gave meaning to freedom.(29) This can be inferred by the choices they made, in terms of labour, residency, family organisation and religious affiliation. However, my research into nineteenth-century St. Vincent reveals that many ex-slaves were restricted in their choices, through both personal circumstances and the continued domination of the planter class. Sidney Mintz wrote that there are grounds for describing 'Caribbean agrarian post-emancipation history as a chronicle of defeat for freed people'. In many ways, this thesis may appear to do this. However, as Mintz further argued, that defeat was not total, and it is important to remember that 'once emancipation arrived, those who had been slaves were no longer slaves'.(30)

(29) Scott, 'Exploring the Meaning of Freedom' p. 416.

(30) Sidney Mintz, 'Panglosses and Pollyannas; or, Whose Reality are we Talking about?', in McGlynn and Drescher, (eds.), The Meaning of Freedom pp. 253, 255.

Chapter One.

Anticipating Freedom.

Within the Americas, slavery as a means of production was fraught with difficulties. The lives of both slaves and free people were restricted, and slavery could only be maintained through threats and force. By the end of the eighteenth-century, slave owners in the British Caribbean were encountering increasing antagonism not only from their slaves but also from a growing number of humanitarians in Britain. Stories of inhumanities practised against slaves became commonplace, and this rising opposition eventually led to a reduction in the influence exerted by the plantocracy and the demise of slavery. Faced with opposition both locally and in Britain, planters in St. Vincent and elsewhere in the Caribbean attempted to resist changes in the way they governed their slaves and organised their plantations and local Legislatures. This chapter will explore the different attitudes towards slavery and freedom held by planters, abolitionists and slaves. It will also investigate the aspirations and apprehensions that notions of a free labour system generated.

St. Vincent Slave Society in the Nineteenth Century.

The French first introduced African slaves into St. Vincent in 1719, but it was not until the island was first ceded to the British in 1763 that extensive cultivation was attempted. The French temporarily wrested St. Vincent from

the British in 1779, and the island suffered two wars as Caribs attempted to overthrow British occupancy. During the years after the second Carib war in 1797, the number of plantations and slaves increased rapidly as more land was put under cultivation, and more slaves were imported from Africa. When the British established permanent control of the island in 1763, there were approximately 7414 slaves and 2104 free people. In 1805, there were 16,500 slaves, 450 free coloureds and 1600 whites.⁽¹⁾ By 1834, there were 22,208 slaves registered in St. Vincent of whom approximately 52 per cent were female and 18,763 were attached to the estates as artisans, labourers or domestics. Women dominated the field and domestic labour forces, but rarely gained skills or positions of authority outside of the domestic sphere. On a sample of forty estates in St. Vincent, only 49 per cent of male slaves attached to the estates were agricultural labourers, yet just over 73 per cent of the women were labourers. In total, women made up approximately 60 per cent of the total number of labourers. This was common throughout the Caribbean. In St. Lucia in 1815, for example, women made up nearly 59 per cent of the agricultural labourers.⁽²⁾

(1) Charles Shepherd, An Historical Sketch of the Island of St. Vincent (1831) (Rpt. London, 1971), pp. 23, Appendix, no. iv, p. iv; For the early history of St. Vincent see Bernard Marshall, 'Society and Economy in the British Windward Islands, 1763-1823' (PhD Thesis, University of the West Indies, 1972).

(2) Figures are taken from T 71/500, Returns of Slaves for St. Vincent, 1834; Barry Higman, Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834 (London, 1984), p. 193. For a discussion of women's experiences as slave labourers, see Lucille Mathurin, 'Women Field Workers in Jamaica during

Slave labour on sugar plantations was physically gruelling. Labourers were organised in gangs based on their age and physical strength. Each gang was controlled by a driver, usually a man, who set the pace of work. The first gang consisted of the strongest men and women. They did the heaviest work, and usually worked in pairs, each pair containing one strong and one weaker slave. The first gang, who were usually in their twenties and early thirties, were responsible for digging and hoeing the fields and cutting the canes. The second gang was made up primarily of young slaves in their teens, and older slaves in their thirties who could no longer keep up with the first gang. Within this gang, labourers cleared the canes of dry leaves, manured the fields and weeded the cane fields.

Children began work as young as four years old, first weeding and then later collecting grass for the estate animals. The driver of the children's gang, which was often referred to as the 'vine gang', was frequently an older woman.

Each year in early November, gangs of men and women hoed the fields for new canes to be planted. They then planted the new canes during November and December. From January to the end of July, slaves cut the matured canes and carried them to the mills where they were crushed and the sugar was extracted from them. During these months, slaves were often expected to work in shifts throughout the night, alternately in the fields or the mills. From August until

Slavery', The Elsa Goveia Memorial Lecture, 14 May 1986, (Kingston, 1986).

November, slaves carried out maintenance work within the estates. The seasonal nature of the sugar crop resulted in labourers enduring long periods of extremely demanding work, followed by periods of under-employment. During slavery, many planters were reluctant to maintain sufficient slaves to carry out the harvesting. Instead they employed jobbing slaves to work during the busiest months.⁽³⁾ After emancipation, planters continued to require large numbers of employees during the harvest months, but refused to pay labourers during the quietest months. In fact, the planters' complaints about a labour shortage ignored the unemployment of many labourers during the quieter months. The seasonal nature of employment within the sugar estates was one of the problems of emancipation that planters and governing officials failed to address when formulating labour policies.⁽⁴⁾

In addition to labour in the fields, slaves also had to provide much of their own food. Planters allotted each of their slaves a portion of land on the outskirts of the estates or in the mountains in the interior of the island to enable them to grow provision crops. In addition, slaves

(3) Details of the sugar crop season are taken from Richard Dunn, 'Sugar Production and Slave Women in Jamaica' in Ira Berlin and Phillip Morgan (eds.), Cultivation and Culture; Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas (University of Virginia Press, 1993), pp. 55-63, and Mrs A.C. Carmichael, Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured and Negro Population of the West Indies (1833) (Rpt, 2 Vols. New York, 1969), vol. 1, pp. 98-111.

(4) Michael Craton and James Walvin, A Jamaican Plantation: A History of Worthy Park, 1670-1970 (London, 1970), p. 216. The problems of under-employment will be examined in chapters 3 and 10.

received portions of fallow cane field where they grew yams, and most families had small gardens around their cottages. Within these small plots, slaves grew a wide variety of crops. Mrs Carmichael, who owned slaves in St. Vincent in the 1820s, claimed that her slaves grew plantains, bananas, breadfruit, yams, tancias, eddoes, cassava, arrowroot, turnips, carrots, pumpkin, cucumber, Indian maize, a variety of leafy vegetables, several types of pulses and a wide assortment of fruits including tomatoes, mangoes, pawpaw and guava. She also claimed that many slaves raised chickens, ducks, guinea birds and pigs. Of course, Carmichael wanted to prove that slave owners in the Caribbean provided well for their slaves, so her accounts of her slaves' flourishing gardens cannot be taken literally. However, they indicate the range of agricultural skills that many slaves developed in their own time.(5)

These small plots of land, initially adopted as a means of reducing the costs of maintaining slaves, symbolised a number of things to the slaves themselves. For many, the gardens were a source of pride and independence, enabling the slaves to earn an income by selling surplus crops. Slaves believed that the land they cultivated belonged to them. They bequeathed their plots to other family members

(5) Carmichael, Domestic Manners vol. 1, pp. 162-173, 177-178. The size of plots belonging to slaves differed from one plantation to another. In his account of the slaves' economy in Jamaica and Louisiana, Roderick Macdonald shows that the plot sizes and conditions of slave grounds for New Montpelier estate in 1825 varied greatly. See Roderick Macdonald, The Economy and Material Culture of Slaves: Goods and Chattels on the Sugar Plantations of Jamaica and Louisiana (Baton Rouge, 1993), pp. 218-234.

along with other material possessions.⁽⁶⁾ Woodville Marshall has suggested that slaves also maintained a sense of resistance to slavery through cultivation, working indifferently in the cane fields during the week, to reserve energy to cultivate their own crops on their free days. Certainly, Carmichael found that one of the most proficient market gardeners and retailers on her estate in Trinidad refused to do any work for the Carmichaels.⁽⁷⁾ Markets became a focus of slave autonomy as they sold their crops, bought household and luxury items and exchanged information with people from different estates. According to one resident of the Windward islands in the late eighteenth century, slaves controlled almost 50 per cent of the local currency in the ceded islands, because of their ability to dominate the production and sales of traditional food crops.⁽⁸⁾

Plantation managers made little attempt to curtail or in any other way interfere with their slaves' private

(6) Carmichael, Domestic Manners vol. 1, p. 197; Barbara Bush, Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838 (London, 1990), p. 48; Woodville Marshall, 'Provision Ground and Plantation Labour in Four Windward Islands: Competition for Resources during Slavery' in Ira Berlin and Philip Morgan (eds.) The Slaves' Economy: Independent Production by Slaves in the Americas (London, 1991), p. 58.

(7) Marshall, 'Provision Ground' p. 63; Carmichael, Domestic Manners vol. 2, p. 208; Bush, Slave Women in Caribbean Society p. 63.

(8) Marshall 'Provision Ground' p. 58. Historian Edward Long also claimed that in Jamaica slaves controlled twenty per cent of local currency in the 1770s. Edward Long, The History of Jamaica (1774) (Rpt, 3 Vols. New York, 1972), Vol. 1, p. 537; Sidney Mintz, Caribbean Transformations (Baltimore, 1974), p. 199. See Macdonald, The Economy and Material Culture of Slaves pp. 28-35 for a detailed account of market trading and economy in Jamaica.

enterprise and they were aware that slaves were very attached to these lands. In fact, Lieutenant-Governor Brisbane claimed for St. Vincent, that there was 'no Object more interesting to the Proprietor, than to encourage his slaves in the cultivation of their provision grounds'.⁽⁹⁾

The land was a means of survival for slaves and also provided them with private space where they could exert some control over their lives. However, not all slaves were successful producers. Carmichael claimed that only the laziest slaves did not manage to accrue some wealth and comfort from their gardens. However, she also admitted that slaves' provision grounds on the estates near Kingstown were not as productive as those in the north of the island. Marshall has also suggested that the grounds offered to slaves were sometimes of poor quality, being rocky or prone to soil erosion. Furthermore, many of the estates' provision grounds were located several hours walk away from the slave villages. This must have made cultivation difficult, particularly for elderly, disabled or heavily pregnant slaves.⁽¹⁰⁾ However, these gardens became an area of conflict after emancipation throughout the British Caribbean, as freed slaves discovered that their land actually belonged to the estates and not to individual

(9) CO 260/45, Brisbane to Murray, no. 4, 26 November 1828.

(10) Carmichael, Domestic Manners vol 1, pp. 173, 194; Marshall, 'Provision Ground' p. 52.

labourers. This was another problem that abolitionists did not attempt to solve before emancipation.(11)

The Planters' Perspectives.

In St. Vincent, there were several factors present which adversely affected the slaves' lives. Firstly, plantations on St. Vincent were primarily owned by absentee proprietors and managed by attorneys and resident overseers. Many of these men were intent on making personal fortunes, and therefore did not consider the slaves' welfare as a priority. Secondly, most of the plantations were home to over two hundred slaves. According to Charles Shepherd, only nine of the one hundred and ten estates in St. Vincent in 1828 had less than two hundred slaves. In addition, the violence of the Carib wars further strengthened the brutality of the predominantly male European community. These conditions increased the harshness of plantation life.

It is certainly noticeable, that after the abolition of the slave trade, the slave population declined most years.(12)

The slave laws of St. Vincent were originally formulated in 1767 and were not repealed until 1820. This was because planters were aware of the frailty of their power over their slaves and therefore wanted to retain as much control as possible. St. Vincent legislators also were reluctant to initiate all of the amelioration policies

(11) Chapter 3 will examine the conflicts between planters and freed slaves over the ownership and control of the provision grounds.

(12) Shepherd, An Historical Sketch Appendix vi and Chapters 3-7.

suggested by the British government. They particularly argued against attempts to forbid the flogging of women or to introduce a protector of slaves. They claimed that slave women were 'the most intemperate and turbulent persons' and could only be controlled by flogging. This was common in other islands, as slave owners rejected demands to treat slave women differently from men. One planter claimed that the slave men of Barbados would object if their wives were not occasionally flogged.(13)

In response to calls from the British government to amend their slave codes, the planters, through their representatives in the House of Assembly expressed the intransigence of their position. In 1825, they claimed their reluctance was based on caution. John Dalzell, Speaker of the House, wrote: 'We feel like men grasping in the dark or walking on a precipice, who under such circumstances cannot be expected either to step quickly or with firmness'. However, the following year, this moderate tone was replaced by resentment. Legislators claimed that their expertise of 'the mind and habits of the negro population' was 'met with a thrilling indifference'. In 1829, they stated that their slaves were 'the most comfortable peasantry in the civilized world' and refused to continue with what they described as 'doubtful and untried speculation and theories'. By 1831, the planters revealed

(13) Marshall, 'Society and Economy' p. 339; Rhoda Reddock, 'Women and Slavery in the Caribbean: a Feminist Perspective', Latin American Perspectives Issue 44, vol. 12, no. 1 (Winter 1983), p. 73; Mathurin, 'Women Field Workers' p. 9.

that they were in a state of acute apprehension. They castigated the Anti-Slavery Society for 'conspiracy against their lives and properties' and claimed that their characters had been 'vilified by ignorance and traduced by wilful misrepresentation'. Even in 1833, when the abolition of slavery was inevitable, the local Legislature fought against ameliorating their slave code. They deliberately delayed the passing of a new slave code until the 1825 code was due to expire. Without a new act, the old slave code of 1767 would be re-instated. This forced the Lieutenant-Governor to accept their new code, despite its shortcomings. Thus, planters were able to retain the right to flog women, and slaves could be made to work long hours during the cropping period.(14)

Planters frequently claimed that they were experts on the characters of their slaves. It was common for them to make sweeping statements on slaves' working and intellectual capabilities, claiming that their remarks were based on facts. Thus, Carmichael could boldly state that 'to overwork a negro slave is impossible'. Shepherd also stated that planters 'must be the best judges of the state of that society in which they are domiciled, and what concessions may be really advantageous to them'. He further

(14) These quotes were taken from various dispatches sent to the Colonial Office by the St. Vincent Governor. See CO 260/42, Brisbane to Bathurst, no. 19, 5 November 1825, John Dalzell to Brisbane, 21 October 1825; CO 260/43, Brisbane to Bathurst, no. 18, 28 September 1826, Letter from the House of Assembly and Council, 5 September 1826; CO 260/48, Hill to Godrich, 4 August, 1831, Petition from the House of Assembly; CO 260/51, Smith to Stanley, no. 4, 1 July 1833, Tyler to Smith, 1 June 1833.

claimed that if they were freed, slaves would 'perish from the want of that support which they now derive from their masters'.⁽¹⁵⁾ The claims that slaves enjoyed comforts unknown to many labourers in Europe were also common. Carmichael and other slave holders strongly supported this assertion to justify their ownership of slaves. Despite evidence that contradicted these typical planter statements, they remained a dominant view of the African-Caribbean labour force both before and after the abolition of slavery. Consequently, planter ideology remained entrenched in what Gordon Lewis has described as 'self-sustaining myths'.⁽¹⁶⁾

The responses by the St. Vincent legislators also suggest that planters felt increasing resentment and alienation. They perceived that attacks against slavery were also personal affronts against themselves. Planters were often indignant at being accused of cruelties and barbaric actions. It was common for them to assert that their slaves' happiness was their primary concern. They further attempted to mitigate the cruelties imposed on slaves, by claiming that slaves were themselves cruel and insensitive. Shepherd even implied that amelioration of the St. Vincent slave codes was a result of the advances made by the slaves in terms of 'civilisation', rather than any

⁽¹⁵⁾ Carmichael, Domestic Manners vol. 1, p. 96; Shepherd, An Historical Sketch pp. 200, 201.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Carmichael, Domestic Manners vol. 1, p. 180; Bush, Slave Women in the Caribbean p. 106. See also Bruce Taylor, 'Emancipation in Barbados, 1830-1850: A Study in Planter Accommodation' (Phd thesis, Fordham University, 1973), p. 60; Gordon Lewis, Main Currents in Caribbean Thought: The Historical Evolution of Caribbean Society in its Ideological Aspects, 1492-1900 (Baltimore, 1983), p. 119.

improved humanity on the part of the planters.(17) In 1838, Henry Sharpe, who was to become Chief Justice in St. Vincent, wrote a pamphlet to Lord Brougham which further reveals the planters' feelings of isolation. He claimed that planters no longer attended meetings concerning slavery and apprenticeship because 'the West Indian Proprietor at public meetings has experienced nought but insult from persons assembled .. they have always assailed his character before they attacked his property'.(18)

The St. Vincent planters' hostility towards emancipation was fully expressed in their 'Solemn Protest of the Assembly of St. Vincent against the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery'. The planters claimed that they were disappointed at the 'hasty, ill-advised and crude measures' formulated by the British Government. They stressed their belief that the Abolition act was illegal and emphasised how much money the British Government earned from its slave colonies. They complained that they had already shown that they were willing to change 'cautiously, judicially and gradually' and felt that abolition was dangerous to property, the lives of the planters and the comfort of the slaves'.(19) This petition echoes several others written by planter groups throughout the Caribbean. For example, the

(17) Carmichael, Domestic Manners vol. 1, p. 265-272, 273, 325; Shepherd, An Historical Sketch p. 200; Taylor, 'Emancipation in Barbados' p. 109.

(18) Henry Edward Sharpe, A Letter to the Right Honourable Lord Brougham (London, 1838) p. 2.

(19) PP, 1835, (278.i) 1, Papers Relating to the Abolition of Slavery in the British Colonies, pp. 151-152.

St. Lucian Legislature sent a 'Humble Petition' to the British Government claiming that when slavery was abolished the freed slaves would 'fall into habits of idleness and vice' unless they were coerced into working on the estates. These feelings can partly explain the irrational and hostile action that many plantation managers adopted after abolition. While the British Government could legislate against slavery, pro-slavery ideology persisted. The attitudes of the planter class concerning race, class and plantation management remained intact.⁽²⁰⁾

The Abolitionists' Perspectives.

In 1944, Eric Williams published Capitalism and Slavery in which he argued that abolitionists often had ulterior and materialistic motives for abolishing the slave trade and eventually slavery. He suggested that the ascendancy of laissez-faire economics, which opposed the monopolies of the sugar producing islands, combined with the economic decline of the plantations of the British Caribbean, strengthened the humanitarians' cause to abolish slavery. He further asserted that many key figures and arenas within the abolition campaigns believed they would profit financially if slavery ended.⁽²¹⁾ Seymour Drescher argued against this theory in 1977 when he published Econocide. Drescher

(20) Woodville Marshall, 'The Social and Economic Development of the Windward Islands, 1838-1865' (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1964), p. 57; Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery (1944) (Rpt, Chapel Hill, 1994), p. 200; Lewis, Main Currents in Caribbean Thought p. 116-123, 169.

(21) Williams, Capitalism and Slavery chapters 9-11.

premised that, far from being in decline, the British Caribbean was capable of greater expansion at the turn of the century and was a crucial part of British import and export economies. He further claimed that abolitionists were able to encourage the British public to embrace humanitarian ideologies over capitalistic gains.⁽²²⁾ This thesis does not attempt to analyse the economic forces present in Britain and the Caribbean during the early nineteenth century. However, it may be useful to outline briefly some of the salient opinions of humanitarians and those responsible for the abolition of slavery to assess the expectations of Britain and the Colonial Office concerning the workings of plantation societies using free labour.

It was stories of atrocities which most galvanised supporters to the Anti-Slavery Society. Women in particular often concentrated their efforts on revealing instances of cruelty and barbarity. The planter class were correct in their complaints that their characters were being vilified by members of the abolition movement. Cartoons in the popular press portrayed slave owners as licentious and sadistic. Hymns and poetry often graphically described the punishments forced onto slaves. In fact, the planters' refusal to relinquish the flogging of women gave the Anti-Slavery Society one of its most potent weapons against the slave system. As Clare Midgely has pointed out, the flogging of women was condemned for both degrading the

(22) Seymour Drescher, Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition (University of Pittsburgh, 1977), pp. 24, 161, 186. See also pp. 6-8 for an analysis of other historians' treatments of Williams' 'Decline thesis'.

woman, by exposing her body to public view, and unmanning the male slaves who were unable to offer their wives any protection.(23) One poem, written by an English woman and addressed to the planters, shows the sensibilities of the abolitionists on this issue:

'Bearest thou a Man's, a Christian's name?

If not for pity, yet for shame,

Oh fling the scourge wide,

The tender form may writhe and bleed

But deeper cuts thy barbarous deed

The female's modest pride.'(24)

This theme was also taken up by the members of the Select Committee, which was formed in 1832 to investigate slavery and the possibilities of emancipation in the Caribbean. Again, the Committee was as concerned with the exposure of the female form during floggings, as they were with the pain that the punishment induced.(25)

While it is important not to overlook the genuine feelings of humanitarianism and the deep-seated antipathy towards the slave system that many members of the anti-slavery movement shared, it is also true that among the

(23) Clare Midgely, 'Free Men and Protected Women: Gender and Anti-Slavery Ideology' Paper presented to the Anglo-American Conference, Institute of Historical Research London, May 1993 (not paginated).

(24) Clare Midgely, Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870 (London, 1992), p. 99

(25) Dianne Paton, 'Decency, Dependency and the Lash: Gender and the British Debate over Slave Emancipation, 1830-1834', Slavery and Abolition vol. 17, no. 3 (December 1996), pp. 170-173.

leaders of the movement were very conservative men.(26) They did not look forward to the overthrow of the plantation system, and they expected that power would remain securely in the hands of the land-owning class. This view was shared by the British Government. The 1832 Select Committee, appointed by Parliament to investigate the realities of slavery, was concerned with two major issues when discussing the feasibility of emancipation: would freed slaves work for wages and could they learn about Christianity and adopt Protestant moral values? In other words, would they become a subservient and passive labour force? This indicates that the British Government considered the survival of the plantations vital to the success of emancipation.(27)

Abolitionists, including members of non-conformist churches, also had rigid codes concerning the relationships between different social groups. Wesleyans, in particular, were opposed to workers' rights. Abolitionists' attitude to class can be clearly demonstrated by the famous Wedgewood design adopted by the Anti-Slavery Society depicting a slave kneeling and begging for freedom. This image of the supplicant slave was also echoed in other anti-slavery pictures. Slaves who adopted a more forceful approach to emancipation were condemned. For example, many Wesleyan missionaries made great efforts to distance themselves from the 1831 slave revolt in Jamaica by forcing slaves to

(26) Williams, Capitalism and Slavery p. 181-182.

(27) Olwyn Blouet, 'Earning and Learning in the British West Indies: An Image of Freedom in the Pre-Emancipation Decade, 1823-33', Historical Journal 34, no. 2 (1991), pp. 391-409.

confess their actions during the revolt and by preaching against the use of violence. Some missionaries even joined the militia to suppress the revolt.⁽²⁸⁾ During the early years of the apprenticeship period, also, abolitionists were quick to praise apprentices who suffered abuse passively, but deprecated those who actively protested.⁽²⁹⁾ Clare Midgely has also pointed out how the employers and supporters of Mary Prince, a woman who escaped from the harsh realities of slavery, criticised her for her hot temper and pride.⁽³⁰⁾ Therefore, while they opposed slavery, many abolitionists did not support race or class equality. They wanted to end the practices of sadistic cruelty that were used to maintain slavery, but did not want to free slaves from the heavy work-load expected of them on the plantations. According to David Brion Davis the abolitionist 'greatest hope, ... was to end the involuntary shipment of Africans to the New World and to transform black

(28) Mary Turner, Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society 1787-1834 (London, 1982), pp. 165-166. In fact, the missionaries attempts to disassociate themselves from the protesters did not save them from a violent backlash by the planter class, who blamed the missionaries for instilling notions of freedom into slaves.

(29) See for example, Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey, The West Indies in 1837 (1838) (Rpt. London, 1968), pp. 243, 166-167, 179-180. Women who protested that they had been denied their free time were described as 'rude and discreditable', while women who suffered without protest were praised. Images used by the Anti-slavery Society can be seen in Midgely, Women against Slavery pp. 99-101.

(30) Midgely, Women against Slavery pp. 88-90.

slaves into cheerful, obedient and grateful labourers who would be satisfied only by working voluntarily for wages'.⁽³¹⁾

The Colonial Office particularly saw access to land as a key issue in determining the success of emancipation and held on to the view that slaves should be discouraged from establishing independence from the plantations. There was a strong belief that large-scale agriculture was a symbol of civilisation and progress and that small-holdings were uncivilised.⁽³²⁾ The Colonial Office, therefore, wanted to preserve the plantation system. James Stephen, who framed the Abolition Act, and was later responsible for overseeing and amending the laws in the colonies, was against the private ownership of small plots of land. He drew up regulations to discourage the sale of crown lands in small plots and to evict squatters. William Green claims that Stephen did not see this as an infringement of the freed slaves rights; however, without land, freedmen were also denied any political voice, as throughout the British Colonies, franchise was linked to property ownership. Nigel Bolland has described the availability of land as a crucial factor in determining whether freed slaves would remain as a dependent labour force or evolve into an independent peasantry. Restricted access to land enabled planters to use punitive measures to enforce labour contracts and harsh

(31) David Brion Davis, 'Reflections on Abolitionism and Ideological Hegemony', American Historical Review Vol. 92, no. 4 (October 1987), p. 800.

(32) David Eltis, 'Abolitionist Perceptions of Society after Slavery', in James Walvin (ed.), Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846 (London, 1982), p. 199.

vagrancy laws as well as tie wages to rents. This pattern of domination was the preferred model advocated by the British Government in the early decades after emancipation. Later chapters will discuss the effects that this policy had on labourers in St. Vincent.(33)

The Slaves' Perspectives.

Planters had many opportunities to express their opinions on slavery and abolition. Slaves, on the other hand were rarely questioned. For example, no slaves were consulted at any of the Select Committees which investigated slavery. In addition, very few Europeans recorded the aspirations of slaves. For example, missionary Ann Hutchins wrote frequently to her friends and family about her own views on slavery, declaring 'Rest not, my dear parents and friends, till it can be said that every Son of Africa is free! I long for the time when our sable brethren shall no longer wear the massy iron collar!'. She does not, however, record the longings of these 'sable brethren', let alone their sisters and mothers.(34)

(33) William Green, 'James Stephen and the British West India Policy, 1834-1847', Caribbean Studies, 13-14 (1974), p. 51; O. Nigel Bolland: 'Systems of Domination after Slavery: The Control of Land and Labour in the British West Indies', in Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (eds.), Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present (London, 1993), pp 108-109, 120; idem, 'The Problem of Freedom in the British Caribbean', in Frank McGlynn and Seymour Drescher (eds.), The Meaning of Freedom: Economics, Politics and Culture after Slavery (London, 1992), pp. 119-123.

(34) Rev. T. Middleditch, The Youthful Female Missionary: A Memoir of Mary Ann Hutchins (London, 1840), p. 125.

In addition, many of the comments which Europeans claimed were made by slaves have to be treated sceptically as they appear heavily biased to prove the outlook of the European writer. Hence, slave holders could claim that their slaves feared freedom and would prefer the paternal protection of their owners. For example, Carmichael claimed that one of her slaves declared: 'Missus, what signify free if we have to vorck; if we be to vorck, we just as soon and sooner vorck for white massa than anyone; white massa deal better than black massa and as for slave, that signify nothing at all, for if we be to vorck, we're better slave than free, missus'. The very language and style of this statement would indicate that it was probably never actually uttered. However, it is likely that Carmichael and many other slave owners had convinced themselves of the reality of its message despite the actions of many slaves who struggled through self-purchase, running away or armed struggle to attain freedom.⁽³⁵⁾

On the other hand, missionaries and abolitionists, who claimed to speak for the slaves, wrote that slaves dreamed of liberty to enable them to pursue religious freedom. For example, James Thome and J. Horace Kimball were two American abolitionists who travelled to the Caribbean during apprenticeship. They interviewed large numbers of people in several islands, but it is noticeable that they rarely interviewed apprentices. In fact, most of their reports of conversations with freed slaves took place either by chance

(35) Carmichael, Domestic Manners p. 247.

or at the insistence of the freed slaves themselves. They were also biased against recording the thoughts of women. Only four of the statements they recorded by freed slaves were made by women. Furthermore, most of the accounts came from people with some authority on the estates. Moreover, the testimonies given by the apprentices were mainly replies to specific questions concerning their attitudes towards work and the law and on the cruelties that they had experienced or witnessed on the plantations. Therefore, the replies that were given cannot be seen as representing all freed slaves. Nevertheless, their statements give some indications of the aspirations of labourers during the apprenticeship period. They also reveal the determination of freed slaves to be heard.

The majority of the respondents stressed the importance of religious and educational opportunities. This was perhaps because Thome and Kimball were introduced to many of the groups of apprentices by missionaries or estate managers. However, several other basic desires are noticeable. The apprentices stressed the importance of family. The elderly, and in particular the female respondents, all expressed pride in the assistance that they gave and received from family members. They also wanted their children to be educated, and they wanted to remove their family members from the control of estate managers. This was notably explained by a group of Jamaican men who claimed that they felt distressed at seeing their wives being taken to the treadmill for punishment while they remained powerless to rescue them. The freed slaves also

discussed labour relations. They looked forward to receiving wages in return for their labour and for the opportunity to choose their employers. Education and knowledge were also emphasised. One woman claimed, as she proudly watched a group of children reading, that she wanted to take the words from the children's mouths and put them in her own. Finally, they demonstrated that they wanted equal access to justice and protection through the law.⁽³⁶⁾

The statements gathered by Thome and Kimball indicate the importance that freed slaves placed on relationships, both personal and at work. They also directly contradicted the claims of Carmichael and other slave owners. In order to further assess the aspirations of the slaves it is useful to investigate their actions.

St. Vincent had no prominent slave rebellions. Shepherd claimed that this was proof that slavery was 'in a very mitigated form'. In fact, it was primarily an indication of the harshness of the system and the slaves' assessment of the lack of success that an attempted rebellion would have. The high death rate among rebel Caribs and banishment of nearly all the Carib inhabitants in 1797 after the Carib war indicated the military strengths of the British authorities. Nonetheless, there were instances of slave resistance and on individual plantations, in response to intolerable conditions, slaves did protest violently. For example, on one sugar estate in Bequia, in

(36) James Thome and J. Horace Kimball, Emancipation in the West Indies (1838) (Rpt, New York, 1969), pp. 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 31, 59, 99, 100-101, 103.

1789, the slaves murdered the planter, and on a cotton estate on the island of Myera the slaves also killed the owner.(37)

These forms of violent opposition to slavery were rare in St. Vincent, and slaves were mainly involved in other forms of direct action. In May 1833, when the planters of St. Vincent appeared determined to continue their opposition to the abolition of slavery by delaying the enactment of their Abolition Act, slaves from several estates in the north-east of the island initiated a protest. This action clearly demonstrates the resolution of many to ensure that they received their freedom. The agricultural slaves from five estates, Colonaire, Orange Grove, Turama, Lot 14 and Rabacca co-ordinated an efficient, organised strike action. On all the estates, the slaves began to turn up late for work. On Turama, the overseer claimed that in four days, the slaves there did only two days work. On Rabacca, every day thirty to forty slaves turned up at the hospital and refused to work claiming to be ill.

The timing of the action, during the busy harvesting period, and the unity displayed among the slaves frightened the planters. Overseers from Turama and Colonaire complained that they could not identify the ring leaders of the protests because the slaves arrived and left the fields as a gang. On Turama and Lot 14, the slaves were accused of more serious conspiracies. The manager of Turama complained that his slaves held secret nightly meetings, and on Lot 14,

(37) Shepherd, An Historical Sketch pp. 183, 191, 214.

one slave man was quoted as saying that 'he would do something for which the gallows would be the punishment and not the treadmill'. Another manager claimed that he overheard the slaves plotting to 'drive away the Buckra men and keep the wives for themselves'. These claims by the planters may not accurately portray statements actually made by the slaves but they clearly indicate the fears that the strike action generated throughout the European community. In fact, the protest was peaceful and was more likely a warning to the planters that they should adopt the Abolition Act. This protest ended when troops were stationed on a nearby estate, and the slaves were ordered by the Lieutenant-Governor to return to work. However, the strike had served its purpose: planters capitulated and drafted their first Abolition Act. The slaves here clearly demonstrated their demands for freedom and their impatience with the Assembly's delays in accepting emancipation.(38)

There are few written records claiming to be from the newly-freed slaves of the Caribbean. Those that exist reiterate the statements from apprentices recorded by Thome and Kimball concerning their respect for the law. William Green claimed that freed slaves did not envisage gaining full equality with whites; however, an examination of the few statements available from freed slaves indicates that

(38) PP 1835, (278.1) 1, Papers Relating to the Abolition of Slavery in the British Colonies, pp. 142-148. In chapter 10, I will discuss the fears expressed by Europeans when facing conflicts from the African-Caribbean labour force.

they wanted a just and equal society.⁽³⁹⁾ In Barbados, labourers of one parish wrote to the Governor promising to 'Guard against future Tyranny and Oppression'. The labourers of St. George in St. Vincent also wrote an open letter to the Queen on Lieutenant-Governor Tyler's return to Britain. They thanked her for having appointed Tyler as their Governor and expressed their loyalty to the Queen and asserted that they felt 'sensibly the high privileges we enjoy under your benignant reign'.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Similar letters were sent representing labourers in other islands including Jamaica and St. Lucia. The labourers' demand for legal rights was also noticed by Stipendiary Magistrate Struth, who remarked in 1842 that St. Vincent labourers 'exact most rigidly the rights and privileges that they have earned.'⁽⁴¹⁾

Two popular songs which were sung during apprenticeship in St. Vincent also reveal the expectations of the labourers when they were fully free. John Anderson, a stipendiary magistrate stationed in Kingstown, recorded one of these songs in his diary. It showed that the apprentices looked forward to celebrating freedom and a new and equal legal status.

'Rights and privileges

(39) William Green, British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment, 1830-1865 (Oxford, 1876), p. 296.

(40) Woodville Marshall, '"We be Wise to many more Tings": Blacks' Hopes and Expectations of Emancipation', in Beckles and Shepherd (eds.), Caribbean Freedom p. 14; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 9 May 1840

(41) CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, 6 June 1844, No. 29, Stipendiary Magistrates' reports, Struth's report, 1 March 1844.

Rights and privileges

We shall hab, we shall hab

My fader gave me twenty pound

For to dance Queen Adelaide jig.'⁽⁴²⁾

The terms 'rights' and 'privileges' are open to several interpretations. The expression 'rights' suggests both an access to legal rights and the justice in the courts and the ability to choose working conditions and family organisation. 'Privileges' was a term used to describe the food and clothing allowances given to slaves and apprentices. Slaves perceived that managers were obliged to give out sugar, salt fish and rum as payment and as a gratuity. However, privileges also had a wider meaning. When members of the free coloured community petitioned for privileges, these encompassed all the additional perquisites that Europeans received, particularly concerning political rights, fair treatment in the law courts and economic opportunities. The song, therefore, clearly displays the freed slaves' expectations that freedom would also give them equality.

The words of a second song were recorded by a Methodist missionary and revealed the antipathy of the labourers for members of the planter class.

'Never quarrel, never fight

That would be a shocking sight

'Mancipation Bill go pass

(42) University of Aberdeen, Manuscript, John Anderson's Journal (1836-1839), p. 135.

Poor Buckra have to eat long grass' (43)

The implication of this song is that after emancipation, many whites would undergo financial hardship and ruin. In addition, the song suggests that labourers should unite and work together after freedom to gain their goals. Both songs also express the joy and anticipation that slave labourers felt as emancipation approached. This contrasts with the pessimistic and angry predictions of the planters.(44)

Conclusion.

On the eve of emancipation, there were three main contrasting views on how the new free society would evolve. Planters were pessimistic and opposed to any improvements in their labourers' living and working conditions. They wanted to retain physical control over the African-Caribbean population, and had persuaded themselves that freed slaves would not work for wages. Despite huge concessions given to them by the British Government, including the £20 million compensation money and continued monopoly of the British markets, many planters were embittered and defiant. In many ways, the plantation managers' actions after emancipation

(43) WMMS, Box 138, File 1836, no. 200, Rathbone to General Secretaries, 27 August 1836.

(44) Both these songs have a slightly taunting and mocking tone to them. In St. Lucia, Michael Louis has shown how people used 'belair' songs to taunt and defy people in authority. These songs may have had a similar purpose for the apprentices of St. Vincent. See Michael Louis, '"An Equal Right to the Soil": The Rise of the Peasantry in St. Lucia, 1838-1900' (PhD Thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1981), pp. 143-144.

can be interpreted as their attempts to prove their predictions.

British abolitionists and those employed by the Colonial Office, on the other hand, wanted plantations to survive and planters to retain their authority, but in a less brutal form. James Stephen, for example, as permanent under-secretary of state, opposed and attempted to revise many of the planters' repressive vagrancy and employment laws, but continued to support the notion that freed slaves should be obliged to work on the plantations and that the labouring class should suffer different and more brutal forms of punishment than their employers.⁽⁴⁵⁾ In the early days after the abandonment of the apprenticeship period, missionaries, Governors and representatives from the Anti-slavery society addressed the freed slaves in strong terms concerning their duties to remain working and accept the wages and conditions imposed on them. Lieutenant-Governor Tyler, for example, travelled throughout the island of St. Vincent, stressing the labourers' obligations to their employers. Wesleyan missionaries also reported that they had exhorted their congregations in a similar fashion. A few months after full emancipation, a representative from the Anti-Slavery Society, Captain Stuart, also visited St. Vincent and gave an address to the labourers. He told them

(45) Green, 'James Stephen and British West India Policy' pp. 38-39. Green's paper shows how Stephen was responsible for moderating many of the Acts drafted in the Colonies to make them more lenient. While this is the case, the new Acts continued to impose very different forms of punishment on employers and employees. Employers who broke their labour contracts faced fines, while labourers faced prison sentences with hard labour.

that labourers had no rights to their provision grounds; that they should not work indolently; that they would not get a full day's pay for less than a full day's labour; that they should not become idle; that they could not break their contracts; and that they had no rights to the sugar and rum produced on the estates. This patronising string of negatives indicates the superiority that men like Stuart believed they possessed.⁽⁴⁶⁾

The freed slaves themselves had a different agenda. They wanted to improve their educational, financial and legal positions as well as strengthen family and community relationships. While for some, this meant continuing to work on the plantations, but under improved and more equal conditions, others chose a radical re-organisation of their home and working lives. In the following chapters, this thesis examines how the disparity between planters', colonial officials', Church representatives' and labourers' perspectives affected the lives of the inhabitants of St. Vincent. It examines the achievements of the first generation of free labourers, but also discusses how many of the rights and privileges demanded by them were eroded during the first fifty years of freedom as a result of poverty, unemployment and lack of freehold opportunities.

(46) CO 260/57, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 172, 9 July 1838, Extract from Lieutenant-Governor Tylers Address to be delivered to the Apprentice Labourers; WMMS, Box 140, File 1838, Aldis to General Secretaries, 7 August 1838; The St. Vincent Chronicle and Public Advertiser, 7 May 1839, Captain Stuart's Address.

Chapter Two.

The Apprenticeship Period.

In the British West Indies, the Imperial Abolition of Slavery Act granted slave owners £20 million compensation for the loss of their slaves. It also introduced an apprenticeship period, requiring slaves to work unpaid for just over forty hours per week, and at the same time training slaves for full freedom. Slaves were to be divided into two groups, 'praedial' and 'non-praedial' workers. The non-praedial workers were to be fully freed in 1838, four years after the abolition of slavery and the praedial workers were to be apprenticed for an extra two years. Under the Imperial Act, apprentices were entitled to the same food, clothing, medical care, housing and land as they had received during slavery. Praedial apprentices were also given twenty-five free days when they could choose to work for wages as well as time off to cultivate their provision grounds. Both groups were to be overseen by special magistrates, who would liaise between them and the planters and were responsible for judging and sentencing cases involving labour disputes. All children under the age of six were declared totally free on 1 August 1834.

The Abolition Act, drafted by James Stephen, who was a legal counsellor at the Colonial Office, was hastily written and contained many vague and ill defined clauses. These were

often exploited by the legislative bodies in the Caribbean and the apprenticeship period was abolished in 1838.(1)

In their studies on the apprenticeship period, Swithin Wilmot, Richard Fruct, Woodville Marshall and Thomas Holt have described how the conflicts that arose during the period led to a greater alienation between labourers and their employers and how future labour relations were coloured by the atmosphere created during the transition from slavery to freedom.(2) In this chapter, I aim to examine how apprentices in St. Vincent reacted to the restraints imposed on them. In particular, I will look at how the apprenticeship period affected the lives of women and contributed to the new gender roles that were formulated after the abolition of slavery. I will also consider specific acts of sexual repression carried out by legislators and individual planters.

Like most of the other colonies in the British West Indies, St. Vincent commemorated 1 August 1834 peacefully. The people celebrated in churches and mainly returned to work the following Monday.(3) However, within a two month

(1) See Thomas C. Holt, The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938 (Baltimore, 1992), chapters 1 and 2.

(2) Swithin Wilmot, 'Not "Full Free": The Ex-Slaves and the Apprenticeship System in Jamaica, 1834-1838', Jamaica Journal, 17 (August-October 1984), pp. 2-10; Richard Fruct, 'Emancipation and Revolt in The West Indies: St. Kitts, 1834', Science and Society, 39 (1975) pp. 199-214; Woodville Marshall, 'Apprenticeship and Labour Relations in Four Windward Islands', in David Richardson (ed.), Abolition and its Aftermath: The Historical Context, 1790-1916 (London, 1985); Holt, The Problem of Freedom chapters 2 and 3.

(3) PP, 1835, (278-11) 1, p. 153.

period, at least 284 individuals had been brought before the three special magistrates in St. Vincent, including 134 cases which involved women. These apprentices were mainly charged with idleness, neglect of duty and being late.(4) Within this short period of time a power struggle between overseers and apprentices had begun, and it was this struggle that eventually led to the premature abandonment of the whole system in 1838.

The Special Magistrates.

The failure of the apprenticeship was a result of the conflicting aspirations of planters, Colonial Officials and apprentices. Additionally, the measures adopted to protect apprentices from illegal exploitation were totally inadequate. The special magistrates, who were recruited to oversee the apprenticeship period, were poorly paid and badly trained. For example, many were ignorant of the island's previous slave codes, and did not trouble to consult old slave returns to ensure that apprentices had been correctly classified as praedial or non-praedial workers. John Colthurst, who arrived in St. Vincent in 1838 after working in Barbados, was extremely unimpressed by his colleagues. In his journal he wrote: 'What is the use of these Specials if they do not open their eyes and ears to do good services?'(5)

(4) CO 260/52, Tyler to Spring Rice, no. 17, 1 November 1834, Abstract of offences and punishments, as returned by the stipendiary magistrates from 1 August 1834 to 30 September 1834.

(5) Woodville Marshall (ed.), The Colthurst Journal: Journal of a Special Magistrate in the Islands of Barbados and St. Vincent July 1835 - September 1838 (New York, 1977), p. 148.

At the beginning of the apprenticeship period in St. Vincent three men were expected to cover the whole island and the Grenadines until January 1836, when an additional three men were recruited. The terrain was rough and the roads were not surfaced, impossible to use during the rainy season and non-existent in some areas. Magistrates needed at least two horses as well as access to canoes and boats to travel from one plantation to the next. However, their salaries were inadequate to even cover their expenses. In effect, they were forced to rely on the hospitality and resources of the Assembly and plantation managers, who in return expected the magistrates' support.⁽⁶⁾

The reports from the magistrates in St. Vincent revealed how some of them supported the planters. Thomas St. Clair, for example, received a plate worth 135 guineas from the local Assembly for 'the high and favourable regard he has justly acquired in this community'. His punishment lists reveal that apprentices under his care were frequently flogged or forced to do extra work on their estates. Furthermore, he was criticized by the Colonial office for his use of excessive cruelty and the violent suppression of a suspected conspiracy, about which he had very little evidence. Robert Pitman was also questioned during the first year of the apprenticeship period for his use of extremely long solitary confinement sentences and his own brutal punishments after a protest in his district. He was

(6) *Ibid.* p. 27.

questioned again for sentencing a man to fifty lashes in 1837.(7)

Family Life Under Apprenticeship.

Women formed the majority of the field labourers at the time of emancipation and therefore were vulnerable to exploitation by overseers and managers. Plantation managers were reluctant to relinquish the power that they had enjoyed during slavery, and they were particularly loath to lose the power that they held over the bodies of black women. For example, the British Government legislated that women could not be flogged by the plantation managers or special magistrates. Planters argued bitterly against this and devised means to ensure that they could still have their women whipped. In Jamaica, for example, the local Act of Abolition included a clause that allowed women held in the houses of correction to be flogged.(8) The general abuses committed by plantation managers affected the work and family lives of these women. During slavery a gender stratification had evolved that required women to perform equal work in the fields alongside men, but made them inferior in terms of the skills they could acquire. African-Caribbean women were forced into the roles of brute worker, breeding stock and sexual partner for the planter class, but were denied any rights to their children or to

(7) CO 260/54, Smith to Glenelg, no. 6, 31 December 1835; CO 260/56, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 6, 4 January 1838, Pitman to Tyler, 23 December 1837.

(8) W.L. Burn, Emancipation and Apprenticeship in the British West Indies (London, 1937), p. 286; PP, 1836, (560) xvi, p. 346.

learn trades which would class them within the slave elite. Planters were well aware that when fully free, women and men would adopt new customs that would remove women from the fields and the overseers' control. Missionaries and other abolitionists often spoke of the day when women could leave the fields and enter a separate sphere of domestic work and child rearing.⁽⁹⁾ The planters' reaction was to exact as much labour as they could from the women. In effect, planters punished the women for the abolition of slavery by removing any privileges that slave women had received.

Wilmot has shown that the apprenticeship period in Jamaica revealed a catalogue of male aggression towards women. Many petty and aggravating instances of cruelty and contention between estate managers and their workers were aimed specifically at making the lives of women as difficult and hard as possible. Thus, by falsely classifying domestic workers as praedials, managers hoped to gain an extra two years of free labour from them and to increase the number of field workers. In St. Vincent, the appraisal of slaves into the two categories of praedial and non-praedial was performed by the Justices of Peace, who were primarily plantation managers and slave holders. In 1838, John Colthurst discovered a plantation in his district where all the slaves had been appraised as praedial workers.⁽¹⁰⁾

(9) Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey, The West Indies in 1837, being a Journal of a Visit to Antigua, Montserrat, Dominica, St. Lucia, Barbados and Jamaica (1838) (Rpt. London, 1968), p. 120; James Thome and J. Horace Kimball, Emancipation in the West Indies (1837) (Rpt. New York, 1969), p. 49.

(10) Wilmot, 'Not "Full Free"' pp. 8-9; Marshall (ed.), The Colthurst Journal p. 147.

Pregnant women were also singled out for abuse. They were expected to carry out strenuous work even when heavily pregnant and were not given the lying-in time that slave women had received. Some were even denied medical care during their pregnancy. Women with six or more children were also sometimes denied the customary right to 'sit down' and were sent back into the fields. The St. Vincent slave codes had allowed women who had six surviving children to carry out only light tasks on the plantation and still receive the same food and clothing allowances as other slaves. The Abolition Act did not include this clause. As Marshall noted, the allowances of slavery became 'indulgences' during the apprenticeship period and were used as a bribe for extra work in lieu of payment and removed as a punishment.⁽¹¹⁾

During slavery, a series of jobs had been created to occupy elderly and weaker slaves and ensure the smooth running of the plantations. One such job was that of nurse for babies and young children on the estate. While mothers worked in the fields, their children were looked after by these women. These nurseries were often abandoned when the planter no longer owned the children; mothers were expected to look after their children and work a full day in the fields. This was an attempt by planters to force parents to

(11) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 268, 21 November 1837, Tables and reports from the Special Magistrates for September, Circular letter from Tyler to Special Magistrates, 7 November 1837; Thome and Kimball, Emancipation in the West Indies p. 106; CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 196, 31 August 1837, Sutherland to Tyler, 19 July 1837; Marshall, 'Apprenticeship and Labour Relations' p. 209.

apprentice their children to the estates to enable the estate to control the labour of the apprenticed child until he or she reached adulthood. As a result of the closure of nurseries, women with young children were constantly late for work and many had to take their infants into the fields with them. Apprentices throughout the West Indies also complained that women were no longer given time off to breast feed their children. Furthermore, in St. Vincent, mothers were also expected to make up any time that they took off work to care for a sick child. In addition, children were also denied food, clothing and medical care at the estates' expense.⁽¹²⁾

During the first year of apprenticeship, apprentices attempted to gain more control over their lives and were bitterly disappointed with the terms of the apprenticeship. In a report on the condition of free children, special magistrate Robert Pitman wrote of a 'strong feeling of opposition' existing between the apprentices and the planter class during the early period of the apprenticeship. He claimed that their:

'previous notions of liberty had obtained a hold over their imaginations of so aggravated a description that they were ... still smarting under the disappointment they experienced, when they found their anticipated freedom from all kind of work, converted into a legal

(12) Mrs. A. Carmichael, Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured and Negro Population of the West Indies (1838) (Rpt. New York, 1969), p. 186; PP, 1836, (560) xvi, p. 62; CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 268, 21 November 1837, Circular letter from Tyler to Special Magistrates, 7 November 1837.

compulsion of labour with the additional malefaction of depending upon the good will of the person in charge of the estate, for many little indulgences and privileges which had been guaranteed to them and their children by the old slave laws.'

As Pitman noted, planters and apprentices had radically opposing views on how liberty should work. This could be clearly seen in the refusal of parents to apprentice their children on the estates. Pitman wrote: 'When they found their ideas respecting their own freedom, thrown to the ground, they ... clung with tenacity to the right of expressing free will in respect of their unfettered offspring.'(13)

Child care and the freedom of children was an important issue to both parents and planters. Planters resented their lack of control over the plantation children and the fact that the work once performed by 'piccaninny' gangs now had to be done by adults. In drafting their Abolition Act, St. Vincent legislators had attempted to increase their power over free children by stating that if a parent could not care for a child, he or she should be apprenticed to the estate until the age of twenty-one. In fact the Imperial Act had stated that a child could only be apprenticed if he or she could not be cared for from 'any other quarter', and

(13) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 70, 5 April 1837, Pitman to Tyler, 21 November 1836. It was a common view among contemporary observers that slaves wished to cease all work when finally freed. They based this view on evidence from the planters and ignored the willingness of apprentices and freed people to work for wages. See also chapter 1.

that the estate should also provide for the child's education. This was one of the clauses that the Assembly was forced to amend before their Abolition Act was passed.(14)

The St. Vincent Assembly made other attempts to regain legal control over the children's labour. In 1836, during the debate on the establishment of a free school in the colony, the Assembly recommended that schooling should be made compulsory for children. In addition, they recommended that it be paid for by either demanding extra work from all the apprentices, or by having all children over the age of seven work four days a week on the estates. Education for the apprentices' children, should be based on 'the timely instruction of husbandry'. Lieutenant-Governor Tyler was also keen to instil in the children 'early habits of labour and industry'. He suggested that education should be compulsory and paid for by the parents. This would force them to apprentice their children to find the fees. The Colonial Office, however, did not approve of either of these suggestions. The report on education carried out in Jamaica by C.J. Latrobe had revealed the strength of the apprentices' desires for education. Therefore it was felt that education did not need to be made compulsory.(15)

The following year, the Assembly again approached the Lieutenant-Governor respecting the free children. In language rich with moral indignation the legislators claimed

(14) PP, 1835, (280-II) 1, p. 163.

(15) CO 260/54, Smith to Glenelg, no. 17, 1 June 1836, Report from a Joint Committee of the Legislature regarding Negro Education.

that 'the neglect by unattending mothers' had led to a large and increasing mortality among children. African-Caribbean women during slavery were judged by Europeans as unfit and unfeeling mothers. They were accused of extreme cruelty, and neglect, preferring to attend dances than care for their children. For example, Mrs. Carmichael, a slave owner in St. Vincent and Trinidad, maintained that her slave women were unnatural and cruel to their offspring. She wrote: 'Negro mothers, with only one exception, I have found cruelly harsh to their children, they beat them unmercifully for perfect trifles.' Tyler also adopted the language and beliefs of the planter class. So strong was the idea that women apprentices were bad mothers that he did not question the statements of the Assembly. He instructed his magistrates to investigate this 'conduct so unnatural and reprehensible', to carry out a survey of the births and deaths of children and to teach parents good child care, 'the neglect of which is not only disgraceful to themselves, but also a crime in the eyes both of God and Man.'(16)

In reply only John George Smith, the magistrate in the Grenadines, agreed that mothers were responsible for infant mortality. He linked this to the fact that no children were apprenticed to the estates and suggested that 'only compulsion will ameliorate the condition.'(17)

(16) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 70, 5 April 1837, Tyler to Special Magistrates, 12 October 1836; Barbara Bush, Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 (London, 1990), p. 103; Carmichael, Domestic Manners p. 269; CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 70, 5 April 1837, Tyler to Special Magistrates, 12 October 1836.

(17) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 70, 5 April 1837, Smith to Tyler, 22 February 1837.

Robert Pitman, however, responded most quickly and fully to dispute the Assembly's claims. Pitman's experiences and reports as a special magistrate reveal the difficult position that magistrates were placed under. He could be extremely harsh and unsympathetic to the apprentices when they questioned his or the planters' authority, but he was also aware that the Colonial Office expected him to protect the apprentices. In response to Tyler's letter, Pitman wrote a lengthy report containing his views and observations on the issue of parenting in his district. He stated that infant mortality was not the result of neglect from mothers, but due to the conflict between mothers and their estate managers. There had been an island wide outbreak of measles and many mothers had feared that by taking their children to the estate hospitals or by consulting the doctors, the estates would have a claim on the children's labour. Consequently, a large number of children had died from the disease. However, because of improved labour relations, many parents had agreed to work extra days on their estates in return for free medical care for their children. The usual agreement was that each year, one of the parents would work six extra days for their first child and nine days if they had more than one child.

Out of twenty estates in Pitman's district, twelve had made agreements for the parents to give extra labour for the doctors' fees and on the other estates the parents had decided to pay the doctors themselves if their children were ill. Usually, it was the mothers who agreed to do the extra work to cover the fees. Of the twelve estates with

agreements concerning doctors' bills, three reportedly had agreements with either parent, the other nine with only the mothers. During slavery, mothers had been given the food and clothing allowances for their children and paternity was not acknowledged by the planters. It would appear that during the apprenticeship period, the responsibilities of child care in some families were shifting. In fact, fifty-nine children lived away from their mothers in Pitman's district and some were reportedly with their fathers or other relatives.⁽¹⁸⁾ Generally, however, it was the women who shouldered the main responsibilities for feeding and caring for their children. Far from being unnatural and unfeeling parents, mothers in St. Vincent experienced additional hardships to ensure their children were protected against having to work on the estates. By 1837, only three children had been apprenticed, and these children came from families with extreme problems of alcohol addiction.⁽¹⁹⁾

Infant mortality during the apprenticeship period was high, but not as high as during slavery. According to the special magistrates reports, from 1 August 1834 to 31 July 1836, 443 children died, out of a total population of 3534 children. There were 1025 births. According to Barry Higman's figures for St. Vincent between 1817 to 1834, the infant mortality rate for boys was 459 deaths per 1000

(18) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 70, 5 April 1837, Pitman to Tyler, 21 November 1836.

(19) CO 260/56, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 58, 10 March 1838, Returns of free children apprenticed under the Abolition of Slavery Act.

births and for girls, 381 deaths per 1000 births.⁽²⁰⁾ The figures for the apprenticeship period include the deaths of infants and other children under six years old.

The Apprentices' Resistance.

Apprentices reacted both individually and collectively against the planters' unfair management. Some attempted legal means to achieve better conditions. As individuals, they could lodge an official complaint with the special magistrate. In Jamaica, this was a risky undertaking and depended on where the apprentice lived. Some apprentices, notably those in St. Ann, were often forced to flee to a magistrate in another district to plead their cases.⁽²¹⁾ In St. Vincent, however, the choice was limited and this was reflected in the small number of complaints made. For example, in the first two months of apprenticeship, there were 284 cases against apprentices, but only eight cases against free people. For these the fines ranged from two dollars to eight dollars. Interestingly, the highest fine was imposed on a free coloured woman.⁽²²⁾

Apprentices could also be punished themselves if they could not substantiate their complaints. St. Clair, for example, had apprentices put into the stocks or sentenced to

(20) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 70, 5 April 1837, Tyler to MacGregor, 14 March 1837; Barry Higman, Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834 (London, 1984), p. 319.

(21) Burn, Emancipation and Apprenticeship p. 258.

(22) CO 260/52, Tyler to Spring Rice, no. 17, 1 November 1834, Abstract of offences and punishments, as returned by the stipendiary magistrates from 1 August 1834 to 30 September 1834.

hard labour on the treadmill for 'frivolous' and 'absurd' claims against their masters. He punished nine people in the first year for making false complaints. Furthermore, it was very difficult for apprentices to complain if they felt they had been unfairly treated by a magistrate. In 1837, when a gang of apprentices complained about Pitman, he had their case heard by Anderson. As Tyler noted later, it was unfair that Pitman should select his own judge.(23)

A few individuals also chose to pay for their freedom, some for quite large sums of money. From August 1834 to September 1835, forty-two apprentices were released by the magistrates in St. Vincent. Of these, nine males and eleven females were freed in return for payment. The majority of these, (fifteen) were appraised by a special magistrate and two justices of the peace. The remaining five agreed a price privately. The sums paid were considerable. The highest price for males was £175. 3s and for females it was £120. Marshall estimated that apprentices paid one third more on average than they should have.(24) The magistrates followed no rules in determining the appraisal price, relying instead on evidence from the apprentices and their employers.

Many planters resisted apprentices' attempts to buy their freedom and, in this, they were aided by the local

(23) CO 260/53, Smith to Glenelg, no. 30, 30 September 1835, Report from St. Clair; St. Vincent Archives, Dispatches, 91002 3/2, Tyler to Pitman, 30 October 1837.

(24) CO 260/53, Smith to Glenelg, no. 30, 30 September 1835; Marshall, 'Apprenticeship and Labour Relations' p. 214. Swithin Wilmot has also shown that appraisals in Jamaica were fraught with conflicts: see S. Wilmot, 'Not "Full Free"' pp. 8-9.

Abolition Act. The St. Vincent Abolition Act made freedom in a disputed case especially difficult for apprentices. In clause 10, the Act stated that the appraisal price had to be paid immediately or was made void. This contravened the Imperial Act, which allowed the apprentices one full week to find the money. Therefore, if the price of an appraisal was slightly higher than the apprentice expected, he or she could not have time to find the extra money. The Assembly was required to repeal this clause in April 1838.(25)

There is little evidence from apprentices why they chose to pay for their freedom when there was such a short period of time remaining before the total abolition of slavery. In some cases, excessive cruelty was the obvious reason. However, we can only speculate on the motives of the other apprentices. According to Marshall, some apprentices probably did not trust the white community. They may have taken the opportunity to pay for their own freedom in the expectation that slavery would be re-established as it had been in the French Caribbean. Rumours that slavery would be re-introduced swept St. Kitts, St. Lucia and Dominica during the first decades of freedom, which indicates the lack of confidence that the freed people had in the white authorities.(26)

For some apprentices, this was their first opportunity to gain some control over their own lives. It enabled them to actively resist the plantocracy, rather than remain

(25) CO 260/56, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 86, 19 April 1838, Tyler to MacGregor, 14 April, 1838.

(26) Marshall, 'Apprenticeship and Labour Relations' p. 214.

passive. Apprentices who could raise the money to buy out their time could join their families and friends and couples were able to live together. Some, in particular women, chose to become independent of the sugar estates. Others chose to change their employers by agreeing to indenture themselves to work on a different plantation in exchange for their appraisal price. For other apprentices, it may have been a matter of personal pride. They earned their own freedom rather than received it as a gift. During the few months before the final abolition of the apprenticeship, many people bought their freedom because they did not want to be seen as a 'fuss of August nigger'. They wanted to gain for themselves and their family the status of free blacks and coloureds. In her study of the abolition of slavery in Cuba, Rebecca Scott speculated that, because of the power of money, patrocinados, whose legal status was similar to the apprentices, chose to pay for their freedom as a means of gaining recognition and respect from the planters.(27)

However, purchasing freedom was the option of only a minority of apprentices. There is no record of the total number of apprentices that were released in exchange for money in St. Vincent, but in Barbados only 1178 people were freed by their employers, 749 by payment and 429 without fees. The majority of these, 712, were females. Only

(27) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 196, 31 August 1837, Returns from the Special Magistrates for June, Tinling's Report; Marshall, 'Apprenticeship and Labour Relations' p. 214; Rebecca Scott, Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860-1899 (Princeton, 1985), p. 155.

sixteen people were freed by magistrates on the grounds of cruelty.(28)

For the majority of field workers, individual and collective acts of protest were the only recourse to unfair labour conditions. During the first year of apprenticeship, St. Vincent saw a large number of acts of defiance. In 1835, the special magistrates were ordered to list all the offences and punishments in their districts. Pitman's report was tabulated, with the numbers of offences and punishments for men and women listed separately. St. Clair and Polson wrote out the details of each case, with the dates, places and punishments for each offender. These lists show the range of offences committed by men and women. They also reveal the extent to which individuals and groups of apprentices disputed authority. On the plantations where labour relations were difficult, the lists show many petty acts of retaliation committed by the managers. St. Clair's reports are also useful for the additional information they give on apprentices in the capital, Kingstown.

The lists also reveal the arbitrary use of punishments and the lack of consensus and consistency of the magistrates. There was some disparity in the terms they used. For example, St. Clair used the terms 'absence' and 'running away' indiscriminately. Moreover, he did not state the number of people involved in gang disputes, so we cannot count exactly how many people were punished for separate offences. Some of the punishments were also not clearly

(28) William A. Green, British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment 1830-1865 (Oxford, 1976), p. 134.

stated. He sentenced one woman to hard labour 'until she changed her mind', and he ordered one gang to do ten days extra labour 'unless they agreed to work willingly'. The three magistrates listed a total of 2764 offences, of which 1287 were committed by women. By May 1836, there were a further 3882 punishments inflicted by the special magistrates, 1861 were imposed on women.(29)

In Kingstown, apprentices were often hired out as domestics, skilled workers and higglers, and women were also expected to work as prostitutes. In the first year, St. Clair tried 116 women and 158 men in Kingstown. The most frequent complaints against women were absence from work, abuse and insolence, theft, idleness and refusal to pay their hire. Men were tried for being drunk, refusing to obey orders, stealing, fighting, refusing to pay their hire and running away.(30)

The special magistrate's report also reflects the relations between free people and apprentice workers and they show the difficult existence of many urban women. The punishment lists reveal lives of petty thieving, alcohol abuse, violence and public brawls. Free and apprentice women were sometimes accused of fighting in the streets, and on two occasions, a husband's infidelity was the main cause. Poverty was extensive and some observers in the West Indies

(29) CO 260/53, Smith to Glenelg, no. 30, 30 September 1835, Returns of all the cases brought before the stipendiary magistrates from 1 August 1834 to 1 August 1835; Marshall, (ed.), The Colthurst Journal p. 244.

(30) CO 260/53, Smith to Glenelg, no. 30, 30 September 1835, Returns of all the cases brought before the stipendiary magistrates from 1 August 1834 to 1 August 1835, Report from St. Clair.

claimed that, in the towns, women sometimes were denied food and clothing allowances and lived in destitution.(31)

On plantations, the most common offences involved the withdrawal of labour, either by running away, turning out late or working 'indolently'. Pitman's table listed 305 women and 271 men charged with neglect, idleness and absence from work. In St. Clair's report, seventeen gangs and over 250 individuals were sentenced for similar offences. Women predominated in these cases because they made up the majority of field workers and because many had additional domestic duties and had to oversee the care of their children as well as work on the estates.(32)

The demeanour of the apprentices also concerned the planters and magistrates. Apprentices were accused of arguing, swearing and generally insulting planters. The terms used by magistrates to describe these confrontations, such as impudence, impertinence and insolence indicated that the planter class were determined to retain their position and beliefs of racial and social superiority, while labourers struggled to assert their own sense of dignity and self worth. For example, St. Clair punished one woman who snapped her fingers in the face of her overseer and told him she did not care for him. Women were always remarked on for being the most abusive within the plantations. It was often the female slaves who led the insults aimed at the

(31) *ibid*; Thome and Kimball, Emancipation in the West Indies p. 106.

(32) CO 260/53, Smith to Glenelg, no. 30, 30 September 1835, Returns of all the cases brought before the stipendiary magistrates from 1 August 1834 to 1 August 1835, Reports from St. Clair and Pitman.

bookkeepers and other white estate workers, and during apprenticeship this remained the case. Cursing, chanting and singing, women field workers infuriated both planters and magistrates as they demonstrated the strength of their spirit and courage.(33)

The destruction of property, however, was primarily an act of male defiance. The majority of arson and vandalism cases were committed by men. Planters especially feared cane burning because of the physical and financial damage it could do and therefore it was often punished by the Supreme Court rather than the magistrates, with the death penalty for those found guilty. When the magistrates could not ascertain who was responsible for setting a fire, they punished the whole work force with extra labour.(34)

Group Actions.

Group actions were also common. Swithin Wilmot, Richard Fruct and Gad Heuman have all detailed some of the early protests that took place in other islands in the Caribbean as apprentices first discovered the limits of their freedom. In the first week of apprenticeship in St. Vincent, the field labourers of Adelphi estate also refused

(33) CO 260/53, Smith to Glenelg, no. 30, 30 September 1835, Returns of all the cases brought before the stipendiary magistrates from 1 August 1834 to 1 August 1835, Report from St. Clair; Barbara Bush-Slimani, 'Field Labour, Women, Childbirth and Resistance in British Caribbean Slave Societies', History Workshop Journal, 36, (August 1993), p. 85; Holt, The Problem of Freedom pp. 64-65.

(34) CO 260/54, Smith to Glenelg, no. 15, 3 May 1836, Returns from the special magistrates for February. Polson sentenced 80 men and 95 women from Fair Hall estate to extra labour on their free Saturdays from 7 February to 13 March because of arson attacks.

to work and were punished quite brutally. The men received from thirty to forty-five lashes and several days extra labour on the estate, the women received from four to seven days hard labour on the treadmill, several days extra labour on the estate and one woman was sentenced to seven days solitary confinement. St. Clair referred to the apprentices' demands as a 'spirit of insubordination'. In the same week, thirty-two apprentices were punished for 'not working .. as they ought' on Cane Hall Estate. Forty apprentices on Fountain estate and twenty one on Bellair were also punished with extra labour for turning out late as a gang. Women made up the majority of those punished for these offences. In all, in the first year of apprenticeship, St Clair punished seventeen gangs for indolent work, turning out late and neglect of duty. The swift brutality of his actions echoed the force used by some stipendiary magistrates in Jamaica in the early days of the apprenticeship as the authorities attempted to impose control over the apprentices.(35)

Throughout the apprenticeship period, there were sporadic protests on the plantations and the district most affected was the Kingstown district. St. Clair punished fifty-seven men and twenty-five women and two gangs of labourers in the first year of apprenticeship from Arnos

(35) Wilmot, 'Not "Full Free"' pp. 3-5; Fruct, 'Emancipation and Revolt' pp. 206-209; Gad Heuman, 'Riots and Resistance in the Caribbean at the Moment of Freedom', Paper presented to Association of Caribbean Historians Conference, Suriname, 1998; CO 260/53, Smith to Glenelg, no. 30, 30 September 1835, Returns of all the cases brought before the stipendiary magistrates from 1 August 1834 to 1 August 1835, Report from St. Clair.

Vale. John Anderson replaced St. Clair in January 1836. Arnos Vale, Cane Hall, Struam Cottage, Kingstown Park and Fountain estates were all mentioned three or more times each for having whole gangs punished between October 1836 and October 1837. They were charged primarily for idle work, insubordination or stealing canes. Anderson blamed the continual problems on the proximity of the town and the influence it had on the workers. In fact, in the first twelve months of apprenticeship, the overseers on Arnos Vale were twice fined for assault, and a driver was accused of dragging and beating one of the labourers. In addition, the overseer on Cane Hall was found guilty twice of seriously assaulting apprentices and on the second occasion, the victim was a woman. His reputation was such that Anderson was ordered not to accept any complaints from him against the apprentices. Anderson himself was also excessively zealous in his work. In October 1837, he had forty-one apprentices flogged from Arnos Vale, Struam Cottage and Cane Hall estates for insubordination, indolence, neglect of duty and fighting. As this figure was much higher than average, Tyler removed the plantations from Anderson's control. Between August 1835 and May 1836, the monthly average number of floggings for the whole island was just under fifty-three cases.(36)

(36) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 211, 22 September 1837, Returns from the special magistrates for May and June, Anderson's report, June 1837; CO 260/53, Smith to Glenelg, no. 30, 30 September 1835, Returns of all the cases brought before the stipendiary magistrates from 1 August 1834 to 1 August 1835, Report from St. Clair; CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 268, 21 November 1837, Tyler to Anderson, 31 August 1837; CO 260/56, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 119, 30 March 1838, Tyler to MacGregor, 5 March 1838; Marshall (ed.), The Colthurst Journal p. 244.

In contrast to Anderson's district, the fifth district, in the north of the leeward side of the island, Tinling had few problems. From June 1836 until June 1837, he reported that he punished only three gangs. Otherwise, in his returns there were rarely more than ten people punished each month.⁽³⁷⁾ This contrasts with Anderson, who punished around 100 apprentices each month. In January 1838, Colthurst took over Tinling's district.

In fact, the frequency of whole gangs being charged with neglect caused some concern within the Colonial Office. In 1837 a group of women apprentices complained that they had not received any of their free days because the manager sent a group of them each week to the stipendiary magistrate with complaints, and he responded by sentencing the whole gang to work on their free days. One of the apprentices, a woman called Madge, further claimed that the magistrate, John Pitman, also refused to allow any of the apprentices to speak in their defence and threatened to beat any who attempted to protest. As a result of this protest, Tyler ordered magistrates not to sentence any gangs to extra days unless the managers could prove, using the scale of labour, the exact amount of work that had not been performed. Furthermore, he ordered magistrates to stop punishing whole gangs for insubordination, as usually there were one or two ring leaders that led the others astray. The use of punishing whole gangs had been used as a means of extracting

(37) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 211, 22 September 1837, Returns from the special magistrates for May and June, Tinling's report.

unpaid work from apprentices. It reveals that planters resented paying their labourers as well as allowing them the choice of working on the estate or devoting additional time to their provision grounds.⁽³⁸⁾

Apprentices had learnt to mobilise themselves as a group during the slavery period. In St. Vincent, the last slave protests took place on several estates in the Carib district of the island.⁽³⁹⁾ The apprentices from three of these estates staged a similar protest during the cropping period, in early March 1835. The dispute occurred when the managers of Orange Hill, Turama and Waterloo estates decided to change the hours and method of payment during the busy crop period. Lieutenant-Governor Tyler had suggested that during cropping, the apprentices should earn one and a half pence for each extra hour that they worked. However, within a week the apprentices felt that they were being cheated and not paid promptly. The managers then decided to share among the apprentices one dollar, (just over four shillings) for each hogshead of sugar that was produced. The apprentices did not agree with this, no doubt because they did not believe that they would eventually receive the money. The managers also decided that they would organise shifts so the work was carried out over a thirteen to fourteen hour period, with the gangs working alternately in the fields and mills. Robert Pitman was called in to liaise with the field

(38) St. Vincent Archives, Incoming Dispatches, 91002 29/4: Tyler to MacGregor, 24 October 1837; Tyler to Special Magistrates, 3 November 1837.

(39) PP, 1835, (278.11) 1, pp. 142-148. Details of this action can be found in chapter 1.

workers. In his report he admitted that he thought the demands of the managers were excessive, but he agreed to support them. The results were a week of protests with the apprentices refusing to turn out before six in the morning, the punishment of 128 people, and a full scale riot when some of the offenders were taken to the workhouse.

The protest began in earnest on Tuesday 3 March when Pitman sentenced one man from Waterloo estate to two days extra labour for refusing to start work at four in the morning. He then went to Turama to talk to the apprentices. Here the women began chanting 'No! Six to six! Six to six!' in reply to his order. Pitman had eight women put in confinement and then ordered the gangs to start work at five each morning. At Orange Hill estate he told the gangs to start work at four. On Thursday, he was summoned to punish the field workers who had turned out late. On Waterloo four men and nine women were charged. The women were sentenced to two days extra labour on the estate, but the men were sentenced to forty lashes with the cat, which Pitman ordered to be carried out immediately. As the men were being flogged one woman, Rebecca, continued to shout out 'Six to six!' as a sign of defiance. Pitman sentenced her to hard labour on the treadmill for one week. On Orange Hill a similar scene occurred. Six women were sentenced to two days extra labour and two men were immediately given forty lashes. Here a number of women began to shout and protest during the flogging of the men. One woman was held in confinement, but was released because her husband promised that she would behave in future. A young man was also

sentenced to the treadmill for one week for threatening the overseer who had ordered the young man's mother to work in the mill. On Turama, six men and eight women were charged and two men and three women were sentenced to the treadmill for one week. The rest were ordered to work an extra two days on the estate. Pitman had realised the dangers of public floggings.

The following day, the apprentices on all three estates refused to turn out before six, and on Turama, they refused to work in the mill. Pitman wrote to the Lieutenant Governor to request extra help and decided to take those sentenced to hard labour off the estates. With the aid of constables from the neighbouring estates, the prisoners were put on a cart and led off the estate. However, the other apprentices followed and attempted to release them. Pitman was obviously afraid of violence and described riding at the crowd to try and disperse them. By the time they had reached the police barracks at George Town a crowd of over 120 people had gathered. The police managed to arrest a further nine people who were placed in custody in the barracks and on nearby estates. During the evening the crowd dispersed.

On Saturday the apprentices again refused to work before six. Consequently, Pitman returned on Monday and sentenced them primarily to hard labour for ten hours a day in the penal gang. The work was to be carried out on the estates under the supervision of the troops. Thus, the planters not only won the extra hours, but also were no longer required to pay for them. Two men had their

sentences of flogging remitted in exchange for naming one man and one woman as the ring leaders of the protest. In fact, Pitman remained convinced that there had been a well-led conspiracy on the estates because the women's chants of 'six to six' had seemed rehearsed, and because the women had spat at and cursed their husbands who did not join in their protests during the first round of floggings. He complained:

'... these poor misguided people have been misled and have been the victims, whilst the designing and the most guilty have, as yet, escaped the operation of the law.' Table 1 reveals the extent of the punishments on the three estates.(40)

(40) CO 260/53, Smith to Glenelg, no. 32, 7 October 1835, Report on the punishments which took place in consequence of the disturbance in St. Vincent, Report from Pitman, 22 August 1835.

Table 1.

Punishments Imposed on Apprentice Labourers from Orange Hill Turama and Waterloo in March 1835.

PUNISHMENTS	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
50 LASHES	3		3
50 LASHES AND 2 WEEKS EXTRA LABOUR AND SOLITARY CONFINEMENT	7		7
50 LASHES AND 1 MONTH SOLITARY CONFINEMENT	2		2
40 LASHES	16		16
32 LASHES (8 REMITTED)	1		1
3 LASHES (37 REMITTED)	1		1
1 MONTH SOLITARY CONFINEMENT		2	2
2 WEEKS EXTRA LABOUR FOR ONE HOUR A DAY WITH SOLITARY CONFINEMENT	12	34	46
1 WEEK EXTRA LABOUR FOR ONE HOUR A DAY AND SOLITARY CONFINEMENT	2	19	21
2 WEEKS ON THE TREADMILL	2	3	5
1 WEEK ON THE TREADMILL	1	1	2
2 DAYS EXTRA LABOUR ON THE ESTATE	5	17	22
ADMONITION AND DISCHARGE	2	3	5
TOTAL	54	79	133

Source: CO 260/53, Governor Smith to Lord Glenelg, 7 October 1835, no. 32

The actions of the protesters on these three estates highlight some of the causes of tension within the plantation society. Firstly, the managers decided to change the working hours and forms of payment to suit their own needs without reference to either the previous agreements or the stipulations of the Governor. Secondly, the special magistrate supported the planters despite his own feelings that the hours demanded were extreme. Thirdly, the apprentices reacted immediately to the events, and the field workers were united in their responses and their expressions

of their perceived rights. Finally, there were the divisions within the plantation work force. The constables were made up of apprentices, and the skilled and elite workers on the estates did not participate in the protest. Pitman reported that they strongly condemned the 'conduct pursued by the Negroes, but more particularly that of the women'.(41)

The event also reveals the roles of women and men within the plantations. The women seemed to dominate the protest: they were the loudest and most abusive, yet they received milder punishments. One woman was named as a leader, and Pitman remained convinced that others had taught the women their protest chant. He wrote: 'Nothing, at present can uproot the opinion I entertain that some evil disposed person or persons has been busy instilling into the minds of the apprenticed labourers the lesson of "six to six" which was thoroughly learnt on each estate, and moreover that it was in the first instance taught to the women...' He also claimed that the women were 'the primary instigators of the plot'.(42)

The women's actions can also be seen as examples of the African-Feminist theory expounded by Rosalyn Terborg-Penn. Terborg-Penn stated that women from Africa and the African diaspora evolved three main 'survival imperatives'. These were, firstly, to resist oppression; secondly to adopt leadership roles; and thirdly to re-define the economic roles of women. The women of Turama, Orange Grove and

(41) *ibid.*

(42) *ibid.*

Waterloo attempted to achieve these goals, but were unsuccessful. The planters received their demands for long working shifts during the cropping period and the apprentices lost both their protest and their chance for extra wages. The memory of these events remained strong and the repercussions were felt in 1838, when the labourers again attempted to assert their rights and bargain for better working conditions.⁽⁴³⁾

Punishments.

The punishments handed out to apprentices were similar to those they had received during slavery. Women could no longer be sentenced to flogging, but probably continued to be whipped while on the treadmill and within the houses of correction. Tyler claimed that corporal punishment was not allowed in the gaols unless it was part of the prisoners sentence, but this was not the case in some of the other islands. In St. Vincent, there was a gaol in Kingstown, which could hold 100 people and had an additional four cells with space for six prisoners each. Kingstown also had a cage with room for forty people in two rooms and twelve solitary confinement cells. The treadmill was in the cage. St. Vincent also had houses of correction in Colonaries and Barrouvaille, both with solitary confinement cells and space

(43) Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, 'Through an African-Feminist Theoretical Lens', in Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey (eds.), Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective (London, 1995), p. 6; CO 260/57, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 227, 23 August 1838, Letter from the Managers of estates in the Carib District to Tyler, 11 August 1838. See chapter ten for details of women protesters in later years.

for between thirty to forty prisoners in two rooms. There were also temporary places of confinement in Bequia and Calliaqua as well as prison cells within the estates. During the day, apprentices, regardless of their sex, age or fitness level, were required to work the treadmill. At night, men and women were separated. The prisoners were supplied with one and a half pints of farine or cornmeal a day and two pounds of salt fish a week.

The cage and houses of correction were scenes of degradation and terror for women. When sentenced, the prisoners' hair was shaved supposedly 'for the better promotion of cleanliness'. This action was noted as being especially traumatic to the women. The authorities mutilated the prisoners' appearance and stripped away the women's femininity and individuality. Furthermore, the prisoners were not supplied with any clothing. Hard labour in the penal gangs and on the treadmill tore the prisoners clothes, leaving them effectively half naked. Sturge and Harvey were appalled at the exposure of women strapped onto the high treadmills wearing little more than rags. No female officers were employed in the gaol or houses of correction and rape was reputedly a common occurrence within the houses of correction throughout the British Caribbean, committed by the police guards and the drivers. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Select Committee of 1838 heard evidence that in Jamaica some women and men wore neck collars throughout their sentences in the houses of correction and were chained together while working in the penal gangs. During his tour of Jamaica, Sturge also found

evidence of a woman who was chained to a male apprentice while working on a penal gang on the estate where she lived and that they were locked up together at night. In fact, the woman claimed that even when the man had completed his sentence, the overseer continued to have him locked in the woman's cell each night.(44)

The most common form of punishment for both men and women was extra labour on the estates. In the first year of apprenticeship, Pitman sentenced 268 men and 307 women to extra labour, and thirty-six men and fifty-five women to extra labour with additional punishments. During the first year of apprenticeship, St. Clair sentenced 144 men and 172 women and nine additional gangs to extra labour. In Kingstown, most of the offenders were classed as non-praedral workers and therefore did not have the same free days as estate workers. Therefore they were punished differently. St. Clair sentenced fifty-seven women to hard labour on the treadmill in Kingstown, twenty-five women received sentences of two or more weeks. Other women were fined and two had their apprenticeships extended. St. Clair's punishments were much more physical than Pitman's. He sentenced 252 men to be flogged whereas Pitman only ordered ninety-three men to be whipped.(45)

(44) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 91, 5 May 1837, Tyler to MacGregor 29 April, 1837; Thome and Kimball, Emancipation in the West Indies p. 105; Marshall (ed.), The Colthurst Journal p. 29; Sturge and Harvey, The West Indies in 1837 pp. 139, 166-167, 265; CO 260/56, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 18, 29 January 1838, Gaol returns; Holt, The Problem of Freedom p. 106; PP, 1838, (560) xvi, pp. 349-350.

(45) CO 260/53, Smith to Glenelg, no. 30, 30 September 1835, Returns of all the cases brought before the stipendiary magistrates from 1 August 1834 to 1 August 1835, Reports from St. Clair and Pitman.

Women were far more frequently sentenced to solitary confinement, and this form of punishment, particularly for a protracted period, was considered especially detrimental to the offenders' physical and mental well being. Pitman sentenced twenty-one women to full time solitary confinement but only five men, and sixty-five women and eighteen men had sentences of solitary confinement after work on their estates.(46)

Unfortunately, the full details of the magistrates' cases were not recorded, so we cannot understand why the magistrates chose to sentence people accused of similar offences to different punishments. In his journal, Colthurst appeared to base his sentences on personal whims, depending on how he liked or disliked the offenders and their behaviour during the hearings. He claimed that he never sentenced women accused of lagging behind the men because he did not believe that women were as strong as men. St. Clair explained the leniency of some of his sentences on the age of the defendant or that the defendant was pregnant. These he would sentence to work in the penal gangs rather than on the treadmill. The use of solitary confinement and corporal punishments, including the treadmill, were all aimed at breaking the prisoners' rebelliousness through a combination of humiliation, physical pain and fear. They emphasised and strengthened class and race hierarchies, by

(46) CO 260/53, Smith to Glenelg: no. 32, 7 October 1835, Report on the punishments which took place in consequence of the disturbance in St. Vincent, Report from Pitman, 22 August 1835; no. 30, 30 September 1835, Returns of all the cases brought before the stipendiary magistrates from 1 August 1834 to 1 August 1835, Report from Pitman.

imposing different forms of punishment on different classes of people. Planters were not exposed to the horrors of the cage, treadmill or whipping post, even when accused of murder.(47)

Conclusion.

Although the abolition of slavery had reduced the hours of work that labourers were compelled to work, men and women continued to be expected to perform arduous tasks on the sugar estates. By June 1836, a scale of labour had been written for St. Vincent, which stated the amount of work that apprentices were expected to complete each day in light and heavy soils. The scale was written in non-gendered terms as it continued to be assumed that women and men in the first gangs would perform equal amounts of work. This was not the case in Britain, where agricultural labour for men and women had already diversified. The magistrates all claimed that they were satisfied with the scale of labour and that it often gave the apprentices more free time. Magistrates also claimed that relations between planters and apprentices had improved. Yet magistrates often had to be reminded to apply the scale in cases of dispute involving whole gangs that had been charged with idleness.(48)

(47) Marshall (ed.), The Colthurst Journal p. 29; CO 260/53, Smith to Glenelg, no. 30, 30 September 1835, Returns of all the cases brought before the stipendiary magistrates from 1 August 1834 to 1 August 1835, Report from St. Clair.

(48) Marshall (ed.), The Colthurst Journal pp. 245-254; CO 260/54, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 22, 3 January 1837, Tyler to MacGregor, 15 November 1836.

On many estates, the apprenticeship period caused few problems and the managers and labourers were able to cooperate with each other. On other estates, notably Arnos Vale, Cane Hall, Struam Cottage and Fountain estates in the southern district and Richmond estate in the leeward district, conditions for the apprentices were excessively harsh and relations were tense and angry. These were among the estates to experience wage and labour disputes after 1 August 1838. Furthermore, the St. Vincent apprentices received a higher proportion of punishments than apprentices in Barbados.⁽⁴⁹⁾

Throughout the British Caribbean, the apprenticeship period failed its primary objective of preparing the ex-slaves and their employers for a harmonious free labour economy. This was mainly because of the intransigent and hostile actions of the planter class and the weakness of the mechanisms put in place to protect the apprentices. Magistrates frequently sided with planters and imposed heavy fines and excessive punishments on labourers. The use of the whip and the treadmill, heavy reminders of the degradations of slavery, further widened the divisions between the different races and classes. Although planters and magistrates complained that labourers were not working steadily throughout the apprenticeship period, the quantity of sugar that was produced increased from over 12,711

(49) CO 260/57, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 227, 23 August 1838, Nanton to Tyler, 18 August 1838; Marshall (ed.), The Colthurst Journal pp. 242-244.

hogsheads in 1836 to over 13,120 hogsheads in 1837 and wages increased by over £3149 sterling in the same year.⁽⁵⁰⁾

It is especially noticeable that women suffered excessively during the apprenticeship period. Although they could no longer be whipped by drivers and overseers, they continued to be overworked and unduly punished. Child-care became an additional burden for women on the estates, as many lost both the facilities of the nursery and the free food and clothing allowances they had received as slaves. However, despite all the restriction imposed on them, the mothers of young children earned a major victory over the planters. Nearly every-one of them retained control over their children's future by refusing to allow them to be apprenticed onto the estates. This ensured that, when apprenticeship ended in 1838, all African-Caribbean labourers were freed from any form of indenture and could dictate their own choice of work and residence.

(50) CO 260/56, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 57, 15 March 1838, Tyler to MacGregor, 5 March 1838.

Chapter Three.

Work on Sugar Plantations.

Slave labourers in the British Caribbean had a variety of expectations and ambitions as emancipation approached. Their protests and reactions to restrictions imposed on them during the apprenticeship period revealed that they were determined to improve their working and living conditions. In the early years of emancipation the struggle to achieve better conditions on the estates continued. However, in St. Vincent, two factors greatly inhibited many freed labourers from realising their goals. These were the decline in the sugar industry which resulted in the near collapse of the economy and the restrictive employment policies of planters and the ruling authorities. This chapter explores the lives of labourers who remained on the estates. It will examine the labour conditions that planters introduced and the reactions of labourers to them. It will also discuss the effect that the deterioration of the plantation economy had on estate workers. Later chapters will detail immigration schemes, family life on estates and labour disputes.

The Collapse of the Sugar Industry

Several factors led to the weakening of St. Vincent's sugar industry. By the time that slavery was abolished, specialised sugar cultivation was still relatively insecure in St. Vincent. Until 1763, the island had been a French colony, producing a variety of crops including sugar, coffee

and cocoa. After the Carib wars in 1795, some of the best land in the island, in the north of Charlotte parish, was opened up to sugar cultivation. However, a series of natural disasters in the early years of the nineteenth century destroyed crops and buildings on several estates. By 1828, all ninety-seven of the mainland estates were cultivating sugar, and that year saw the peak of sugar production at 14,403 tons. A severe hurricane in 1831 destroyed many of the major estates, and this forced owners to increase their debts and take out loans from the British Government.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, at the time of the abolition of slavery, many estates were heavily encumbered with mortgages and debts, and the compensation estate owners received did not cover all these debts. There was a marked decline in the production as Table 2 reveals.

(1) Adrian Fraser, 'Development of a Peasantry in St. Vincent, 1846-1912' (M.Phil thesis, University of the West Indies, 1980), pp. 8-11.

Table 2.

Average Annual Production of Sugar in St. Vincent.

Years.	Tons of Sugar.
1824-1833	12,117
1834-1838	10,006
1839-1846	6,383
1847-1856	7,209
1857-1866	6,934
1867-1876	6,936
1877-1886	7,431

Source: Noel Deerr, The History of Sugar, (London, 1950), p. 377.

A decrease in production was noticeable on all estates, but the overall decrease was also a result of the abandonment of estates during the 1850s and the increased production of arrowroot in the 1870s. In 1854, there were only eighty-seven estates still producing sugar on the main island. As production decreased, so did the profits of the estates, and many owners could not repay the debts they had incurred earlier in the century. By 1854, only £87,000 of the £104,750 Hurricane loan given in 1831 had been repaid. Plantation managers blamed two factors for the decline in sugar exports and profits. Firstly, they blamed the free labour system and the refusal of many ex-slaves to work. Secondly, they blamed the Sugar Duties Act of 1846, which resulted in a drop in the price of sugar.(2)

(2) Claude Levy, Emancipation, Sugar and Federalism. Barbados and the West Indies, 1833-1876 (University of

However, other observers cited additional reasons for the decline. One was the high instance of absentee landlords. In 1854, of the eighty-seven remaining estates, sixty-four were owned by absentee proprietors. Forty-two of these were controlled by only six attorneys, and one attorney was in charge of fifteen estates. These estates were left in the day-to-day management of often young and inexperienced managers and overseers. In the late 1840s, Lieutenant-Governor Campbell claimed that few estates were able to produce sugar below the selling price. This was not only due to poor management, but also to antiquated equipment and the extra cost of having mills on each plantation rather than central mills. Other factors included the high costs of imported goods used on the estates. As many of the attorneys were merchants, they were often reluctant to keep imports down or find cheaper alternatives. Attorneys, managers and overseers also frequently insisted on lavish lifestyles and high wages at the owners' expense. John Sutherland, a stipendiary magistrate, blamed the collapse of his family's sugar estate on the attorney, who had bought all the estate's imports at inflated prices.(3)

While a decrease in sugar production was not unique to St. Vincent, it was not typical for the whole Caribbean

Florida, 1980), p. 109; Fraser, 'Development of a Peasantry' pp. 12, 30; See also the appendix.

(3) Fraser, 'Development of a Peasantry' p. 27; CO 260/71, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 37, 11 October 1849, Colebrooke to Campbell, 11 October 1849; John Davy, The West Indies Before and Since Slave Emancipation (1854) (Rpt. London, 1971), p. 185

region. In fact, the production of sugar increased significantly on several other of the smaller islands, including Barbados, St. Kitts and Antigua. Despite the decline in production in Jamaica, and the abandonment of sugar in Grenada, overall the British Caribbean produced more sugar between 1877-1886 than during the last decade of slavery.(4)

After emancipation, there were several attempts to improve sugar production and diversify the economy. Ploughing was introduced, but managers insisted on employing European ploughmen who demanded high wages and found the climate and the abundance of alcohol to be overwhelming. Some estate managers also introduced vacuum pans, but these soon fell into disrepair. Planters also imported expensive guano to improve the fertility of the land and replace the traditional methods of manuring. However, a continued decrease in sugar prices and production ensured that these measures were invariably unsuccessful.(5)

In the 1870s, when most of the estates which had been sold under the Encumbered Estates Act had been bought by a few merchant houses based in Britain, production became even less efficient. One of the major land owners, D.K Porter and Co., was vehemently opposed to the introduction of central mills, which would have assisted some of the smaller proprietors and lease holders, and his control of the local

(4) Noel Deerr, The History of Sugar (London, 1950), p. 377. Deerr's sugar production figures show that the annual average tonnage of sugar produced in the Caribbean increased by over 50,000 tons between 1824-1833 and 1877-1886.

(5) Fraser, 'Development of a Peasantry' pp. 24-25.

Legislature ensured that no money could be raised to purchase one. In fact, the Porter motto concerning any improvements in both the production of sugar and the well-being of the island as a whole was, according to Lieutenant-Governor Rawson, 'let well alone'. One of the members of the Porter family even demanded in the local Assembly: 'For God's sake, leave all public improvements alone, at least till I am gone'. It was the labouring population that suffered most from this selfish and parsimonious attitude concerning the improvement of St. Vincent's prospects.⁽⁶⁾

Residency on the Sugar Estates.

Almost 61 per cent of slaves were plantation labourers in the British Caribbean. In St. Vincent, there were over 14,500 slave field workers by the end of the slavery era whose lives revolved around the sugar cane crop which demanded heavy and intensive labour. Richard Dunn estimated that an average cane labourer devoted 4,000 hours per year to the cultivation of sugar. This reveals that slave labourers worked far more hours than English factory workers in the 1830s. As a result of excessive work, cruel physical punishments, diseases and inadequate nutrition, many slaves ended their lives physically disabled or in poor health. Premature deaths, infertility, high infant mortality, involuntary abortion and still births were also common among slave labourers, thus increasing their misery and suffering. Planters were therefore concerned that slaves would cease to labour on plantations when they were free. However, many

⁽⁶⁾ CO 260/118, Rawson to Kimberley, no. 24, 2 July 1873.

planters rejected ameliorating estate conditions or introducing incentives to encourage labourers to remain on plantations. Instead, they attempted to impose restrictions and punishments to retain control over labourers.⁽⁷⁾

Slave codes throughout the British Caribbean imposed obligations as well as rights on plantation managers. Regulations concerning housing and allowances attempted to ensure that slaves had adequate food and shelter. Laws also regulated hours of work and rest periods. Since the slaves' working conditions were totally unsuited to free labour, planters and estate workers had to establish new relationships. In 1838, the Legislature formulated the Abrogation Act, to cover the first year of full freedom after the apprenticeship scheme was abolished. The Act's primary aim was to limit the movement of labourers away from field work. It stipulated that all labourers had to sign one year contracts with their employers in order to remain as residents on the estates. The Masters and Servants Act that followed permitted monthly contracts but also ensured that labourers continued as tenants-at-will with no rights to reside in estate cottages unless they worked for the estate. Planters became both employers and landlords and attempted to use this dual role to bind labourers to estates. This resulted in disputes concerning tenancy

(7) Richard Dunn, 'Sugar Production and Slave Women in Jamaica', in Ira Berlin and Philip Morgan (eds.), Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas (University of Virginia, 1993), p. 72.

rights, working conditions and pay which clouded the post-emancipation era.(8)

Problems concerning tenancy immediately appeared when apprenticeship ended. The imposition of rents and tenancy regulations were very unpopular with freed labourers. As in other islands, the people of St.Vincent had heard rumours that on emancipation they were to receive their houses and lands as a gift from the Queen. In order to quell this belief, Lieutenant-Governor Tyler, in his speech to labourers explaining the terms of their freedom, stressed that the cottages and land belonged to the estates. Stipendiary magistrates also attempted to explain this, but labourers remained dissatisfied.(9) During the first weeks after emancipation, labourers on many estates were reluctant to trust their employers and insisted that stipendiary magistrates ensure that tenancies and wages were fair. Planters were also quick to stress their ownership of all the land on their estates immediately after apprenticeship ended. Notices appeared in newspapers warning labourers that trespassers would be prosecuted if they were found on many estates. People who did not work on the estates were no longer allowed to cut grass, fish or even walk through the properties.(10)

(8) CO 260/57, MacGregor to Glenleg, no. 172, 9 July 1838; PP, 1847-1848, (17) xlv, p. 23.

(9) University of Arberdeen, Manuscript, John Anderson's Journal, (1836-1839), p. 24; Bruce M. Taylor, 'Emancipation in Barbados, 1830-1850: A Study in Planter Accommodation' (PhD Thesis, Fordham University, 1973), p. 186; CO 260/57, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 172, 9 July 1838, Address by Lieutenant-Governor Tyler to the apprentice labourers.

(10) CO 260/57, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 227, 23 August 1838, 18 August 1838, Nanton to Tyler; The Royal St.

Many observers of slavery agreed that slaves were extremely attached to their homes and provision grounds. In addition to food and shelter, these small plots of land provided slaves with space away from the control of estate managers. Their gardens were also culturally important as family burial plots. Slave owners often used descriptions of comfortable homes that slaves occupied on their plantations to justify slavery. Mrs A.C. Carmichael, for example, stated that slaves inhabited cottages made of either stone, wood or wattle and daub, that had either beaten earth or boarded floors and at least two rooms. These homes, she claimed, were regularly inspected and repaired by managers and were so neat and clean that 'many a Scotch cottager might blush to see them'.⁽¹¹⁾

During the early 1840s, stipendiary magistrates also described these homes and gardens as positive assets. After abolition, many comments focussed on the privileged position that African-Caribbean labourers had compared to labourers in Britain. Stipendiary magistrates reported that Caribbean labourers' homes were more comfortable than labourers' hovels found elsewhere. John Anderson, writing during the apprenticeship period, described the outward appearance of the estate cottages as resembling 'so many beehives'. This description was echoed in the late 1840s by Charles Day. He

Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 28 September 1839, Advertisements from Cullen Cottage, Ratho Mill, Villa and Richmond Estates.

(11) Mrs. A.C. Carmichael, Domestics Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured and Negro Populations of the West Indies (1833) (Rpt. 2 vols. New York, 1969), vol. 1, pp. 128-133.

described the houses as being 'quite African in construction and arrangement, being low and heavily thatched and clustered together in groves of mango and plantain trees, coco-nut and breadfruit, looking at a little distance, very like bee-hives in a bed of cabbage sprouts'.⁽¹²⁾

However, these descriptions changed in the 1850s, when the island was undergoing financial strain. The conditions of estate housing deteriorated significantly, and this reflected the increasing destitution of plantation residents. In the mid 1850s, Lieutenant-Governor McDowell described estate homes as 'ill-constructed and ill-drained groups of comfortless dwellings called "negro huts" owned by the estates'. Little effort was made to improve estate cottages, and many were constructed in unhealthy, marshy land. In 1861, when East Indians began arriving in St. Vincent, many planters were told to construct new homes for the Indians, as the existing estate houses fell far short of accepted requirements for comfort and hygiene. When several indentured labourers died on the estates, the investigations into the deaths showed that the estate villages were often situated in marshy, unhealthy parts of the estates, and that deaths among the creole population through fever were also common. The pride that labourers had once exhibited in their homes was replaced by feelings of apathy and alienation. Samuel Smith, a sugar cane labourer, described estate homes in Antigua in the 1890s as extremely poor, with

(12) CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley, no. 14, 19 April 1842, Stipendiary magistrates' Reports; Anderson's Journal, p. 22; Charles Day, Five Years Residence in the West Indies (2 vols. London, 1852), vol. 1, p. 71.

rotten floors and roofs, and so close together that the inhabitants were afforded little privacy. He claimed that these conditions were responsible for the collapse of stable family life and that people moved to free villages as soon as they could afford to do so to retrieve a sense of dignity and self worth. It is probable that this was also the case in St. Vincent. Many arson attacks on sugar plantations targeted the homes of estate dwellers, which may have been an attempt by residents to have new homes constructed.⁽¹³⁾

In addition to these homes, labourers received small garden plots and provision grounds. On some estates, these were located in waste land surrounding the property, but on other plantations, provision grounds were in mountain land several miles away. These grounds were of between one quarter to one acre, and enabled labourers to grow food for their families and a surplus to sell. During slavery, each member of a household was allocated land for provision grounds, but there is no evidence that this continued after abolition, or if each household retained only one plot. On estates where the land was quite a distance from the cottages, labourers often had problems with praedial larceny and, more frequently, with the destruction of crops by estate cattle. Despite these problems, provision grounds remained central to labourers' survival, as they had done during slavery. The income derived from the sale of surplus

(13) S.V.A. Archives, Dispatches, 91002/3/4, McDowell to Colebrooke, 8 April 1854; CO 260/98, Hinks to Newcastle, no. 53, 15 November 1861, E. Musson to Musgrave, 2 November 1861; PP, 1847-8, (167) xxiii, pt. 1, Appendix, pp. 443-445; Fernando and Keithlyn Smith (eds.), To Shoot Hard Labour: The Life and Times of Samuel Smith, Antiquan Working Man (Scarborough, 1986), pp. 42-43.

crops exceeded cash wages and ensured that when wages were sometimes delayed or not paid in full, labourers could still eat.(14)

Residency rights were central to many of the early disputes between employers and estate labourers. During Apprenticeship, stipendiary magistrates noted that many women were withdrawing from estate work to concentrate on producing and marketing provision crops. Many women expected when they were fully free to also spend more time away from estate work. In 1838, a large number of couples petitioned magistrates to allow women to remain in their cottages, without working on the estates. However, under the terms of the Abrogation Act, women could only be absolved from labour if they were legally married to their partners and had lived on another estate as an apprentice. Otherwise the Act stated that all labourers had to work or quit the plantation. As at this time very few couples were married and Methodist marriages were not recognised as legal, this aspect of the Act did not help many couples. In addition, single women with children were also compelled, as tenants-at-will, to continue as labourers if they wished to occupy their cottages and land.(15)

(14) Woodville Marshall, 'Provision Grounds and Plantation Labour in Four Windward Islands: Competition for Resources during Slavery', in Ira Berlin and Philip Morgan (eds.), The Slaves' Economy: Independent Production by Slaves in the Americas (London, 1991), pp. 48-67; CO 260/59, MacGregor to Russell, no. 1, 10 February 1840, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Polson's report.

(15) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 211, 22 September 18337, Stipendiary magistrates' reports; CO 260/57, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 227, 23 August 1838, Police-Magistrate Nanton's report; Marriages conducted by Wesleyans were not recognised as legal until May 1841: WMMS

The news that women were expected to continue working full time in the fields met with angry protests by many of the female field workers. The stipendiary magistrate for the Southern district, John Nanton, enabled women to reduce their working hours to seven hours a day for four and a half days each week. This small concession provoked serious complaints from planters, who were anxious to discourage any attempts to reduce their workforce. Young women formed the backbone of sugar production, and estates managers were aware that even this small reduction in hours would greatly deplete their labour force. Despite efforts by many families to remove women from field labour, many remained on the pay list. In 1844, for example, there were 745 women on the pay lists in the leeward district, with around 600 of them working daily. Therefore, women with young children and nursing infants were still often forced to take their children to work with them or leave them without care at home.⁽¹⁶⁾

Residency rights of children also resulted in conflicts. Under the terms of the Abrogation Act, children were expected to work on the estates or leave. Many labourers were reluctant to allow their 'free children' to do any estate work and some older children were also released from labour by their parents to enable them to attend school, learn a trade or work on the family provision

Box 140, File 1841, no. 33, Cullingford to General Secretaries, 31 May 1841.

(16) CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, no. 15, 15 May 1839, Nanton to Dakins et al. 12 April 1839; CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 53, 18 November 1844, Polson's report.

plots. On one estate in Nanton's district a family with eight children were forced to leave their home because the parents, although willing to work themselves, did not want their children to do plantation work and the estate manager refused to allow the children to remain at their parents' home. Under the law they were only entitled to reap their ripe crops and to receive compensation for the crops still in the ground. Until the mid-1840s, many labourers' children did not work on the estates.⁽¹⁷⁾

In the first decade after the abolition of slavery, labour and tenancy conditions were not consistent in St. Vincent, and some planters were more effective at coercing labourers to work full time. Stipendiary magistrates also influenced the tenancy rights of individuals. While John Nanton supported the efforts of some labourers to change their family working patterns, John Anderson favoured planters and punished workers who allowed their families or friends to visit them. A member of the Anti-Slavery Society who was invited to sit in on Anderson's court hearings wrote an angry letter of complaint to Tyler about Anderson's attitude, which he said was impatient and partial. He accused Anderson of denying labourers the right to choose who visited them and who helped them cultivate their grounds. Anderson hotly denied this. However, his decisions in court were invariably in the planters' favour. In one hearing, Anderson decided against the labourers in twenty-five of the thirty-one cases. He fined three

(17) CO 260/57, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 227, 23 August 1838, 18 August 1838, Nanton to Tyler.

labourers a total of 21s 6d, evicted some of the others and ordered the rest to make contracts with the planters. In his diary, Anderson described anti-slavery reports as 'gratuitous and libellous fabrications, extremely well calculated for the meridian of Exeter Hall and the sympathies of sugar loving old spinsters'. However, it would appear that very few labourers received a fair hearing in Anderson's court sessions.(18)

Therefore, when tenancy regulations were enforced, many families separated, as children were sent to friends and other relatives to learn trades or attend schools. However, in St. Vincent, labourers did not face mass evictions as they did in Jamaica, and planters were not united in their approaches to tenancy rights. Planters were aware of possible labour shortages and the threat of migration to nearby Trinidad and British Guiana, where wages were higher and freeholds cheaper than in St. Vincent. On many estates, family members were allowed to remain without working full time, and some people were able to live with their family on one estate and claim higher wages as 'strangers' on a neighbouring estate. In 1844 Stipendiary Magistrate Nathaniel Struth estimated that there were approximately 2200 field labourers, which included 102 children who had been freed in 1834, working on estates in the Southern district. However, there were a further 565 adults and 977 children living on these estates who did no work.(19)

(18) CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, 17 June 1839, 11 May, Anderson to Tyler; Anderson's Journal, p. 130.

(19) CO 260/62, Grey to Stanley, no. 12, 17 April 1843, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Polson's report; CO

Labourers were also able to retain one important concession to assist them in tenancy disputes. They were allowed to keep their ripened provision crops if they decided to leave an estate. Furthermore, if they were forced to leave, they could return to harvest growing plants when the crops were ripe. This was an important right for labourers, as it enabled them to change employers if their conditions became intolerable, and it lessened their fears of eviction. Planters claimed that they could not replace unsatisfactory workers with new employees, as they could not offer new workers any vacant provision plots for several months. This right helped strengthened labourers' sense of ownership of provision grounds. On some estates, relatives even took over the provision grounds if one of their family members moved away as they had done during slavery. Despite being very unpopular with planters when it was first introduced during the Abrogation Act, this clause was retained in the Masters and Servants Act.⁽²⁰⁾

The experiences of the 'free children', those who were free when apprenticeship commenced, differed greatly from later generations. Poverty and under-employment among many adults, and the migration of many men to other islands, forced many parents into sending their children to work. By 1845, there were between 600 to 700 children under 16 at work and in 1847, stipendiary magistrates noted that the number of labourers had increased from 7756 to 8316 in six

260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 24, 6 June 1844, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Struth's report.

(20) CO 260/69, Individual Dispatches, John Innes to R. Hawes, 18 November 1848.

months because large numbers of children had started work. Poverty forced many children into work in later years, and, in 1867, Lieutenant-Governor Berkeley claimed that large numbers of children started work as soon as they were old enough to augment their parent's income. Samuel Smith reported a similar situation in Antigua, claiming that as soon as a child looked old enough he or she would start work on the plantations.(21)

Throughout the period, estate labourers were classed as tenants-at-will. They paid no rent, but their wages were two pence per day less than wages paid to 'strangers'. In 1875, there was an attempt by the Lieutenant-Governor to tax the houses on the estate. He believed that as planters derived about four shillings per month from estate residents in reduced wages, they should pay five shillings per year in taxes on each house. However, this scheme was unsuccessful because planters immediately passed the tax onto their tenants, so the tax was abolished the following year.(22)

Working Conditions.

Apprenticeship significantly reduced the number of hours that estate labourers had to work. Planters could no longer demand that mills remained open day and night during harvesting. Because free labourers wanted to organise their

(21) CO 260/65, Grey to Stanley, no. 44, 8 December 1844, Stipendiary magistrates' consolidated reports; CO 265/3 Stipendiary Magistrates' Returns, Consolidated reports, August 1847; CO 260/107, Walker to Buckingham, no. 179, 29 August 1867, Berkeley's Report accompanying the Blue Book.

(22) CO 321/3, Rawson to Kimberly, no. 30, 24 April 1874; CO 321/7, Rawson to Carnarvon, no. 32, 4 May 1875.

own work load, they often disputed the hours of work required of them. The Abrogation Act stated that labourers should continue to work their customary hours. Planters had expected this to mean nine hours a day for five days, but Nanton interpreted it to include the twenty-six free days that apprentices had been entitled to. Therefore, to the annoyance of planters, labourers were able to remain on their estates by working only four and a half days each week. This agreement was especially important to labourers who lived within travelling distance of a market, as it enabled them to prepare their produce on Fridays to sell at the Saturday market. Nanton was later severely criticised for this decision, and he took some members of the House of Assembly to court for libel after they refused to retract their complaints.⁽²³⁾

St. Vincent legislators had hoped to introduce a clause in the Masters and Servants Act to force employees to work from six in the morning to six at night. However, the Colonial Office disallowed this clause. Under the Masters and Servants Act, labourers who were resident on estates were expected either to sign a written yearly contract or to agree to monthly verbal contracts. Very few labourers accepted yearly contracts, which reflects the lack of trust that had been established between labourers and managers. Labourers wanted freedom to be able to quit an estate if conditions worsened and also to dictate their own work load. Therefore, many labourers who remained on estates changed

(23) CO 260/58. MacGregor to Normanby, no. 15, 14 May 1839, 11 May 1839, Nanton to House of Assembly.

their working patterns to suit their own needs and not those of their employers. In 1843, Polson noted the labourers' ability to choose their working hours. He wrote 'the labourer knows his value, he is aware the planter cannot do without him if he works as he pleases'.⁽²⁴⁾ In fact, Polson's use of the male pronoun was erroneous as women were more likely to be absent. In 1843, about one fifth of resident estate labourers were absent from work each day and while women were the majority of estate residents, they made up only one third of those in the fields each day.

The new working patterns of labourers from one estate, Calder, were discussed in the British Parliamentary Select Committee of 1842. The manager of the estate, Hay McDowell Grant, revealed that the majority of labourers had reduced the number of hours that they worked, but the reduction was especially noticeable for women workers. The table below shows the days that the men and women of Calder worked. It indicates that although there were still more women labourers on the estate, women had significantly reduced their hours.

(24) CO 260/58, Agent's Dispatches, Colquhorn to Normanby, 3 March 1839, The Royal St. Vincent Gazette, 21 September 1838; CO 260/63, Grey to Stanley, no. 44, 23 October 1843, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Polson's report.

Table 3.

Labour performed on Calder Estate in St Vincent during the first five months of freedom, from August 1 1838 to January 1 1839 by 85 labourers, 58 were first Class and 27 second class.

male	female	total no. of working days	days worked in 5 months	days absent without leave	days absent with leave	average no. of days at work
7		126	92		34	4.5
5	3		85	7		4.25
4	6		82	10		4.06
7	6		78	14		3.9
7	5		72	20		3.6
1	6		68	24		3.4
3	5		64	28		3.2
2	3		58	34		2.9
1	3		54	38		2.7
0	5		46	46		2.3
1	5		40	52		2
38	47		739	273		

Source: PP, 1842, (479) xiii.i. p. 7, Evidence of Hay McDowell Grant. 25 April 1842.

A very different picture emerges for labourers by the 1860s because of the collapse of the sugar industry in St. Vincent. The decline in sugar production and the introduction of indentured labourers and migrants from other Caribbean islands resulted in a decline in employment opportunities for many estate workers. While newly emancipated workers struggled to be allowed to reduce the number of days they had to work, their children and grandchildren experienced forced under-employment. While there was a labour shortage in the 1840s and 1850s, this was not the case for later decades. By the 1880s, few people in

St. Vincent were able to find full time work on the estates, although planters continued to blame their problems on a labour shortage. According to the 1871 census, there were 14,503 agricultural labourers in St. Vincent. In 1881, this figure had declined to 13,916. However, this is very close to the number of slave agricultural labourers on the eve of emancipation.(25)

On some estates managers introduced task work during or after apprenticeship. Instead of working in a gang for a fixed number of hours, labourers were allotted a specific task: for example, to hoe a section of a field, which they had to complete in one day. This enabled stronger resident labourers to earn around one shilling a day by doing more than one task. According to Hay McDowell Grant, labourers were opposed to task work. In fact, since labourers could earn more by task work and could work independently, it was perhaps managers who disliked the freedom that task work gave their workers which the managers claimed led to shoddy work. By the 1890s, gang labour was rare, and estate labourers complained that managers had increased the size of tasks. This effectively enforced a pay cut on many labourers as the tasks took longer to complete. In addition, many labourers agreed to share out the reduced number of tasks among the families on their estates to ensure that everyone was able to do some work.(26)

(25) PP, 1884, (3840-1) xlvi, pp. 118, 121, 125; The Royal St. Vincent Government Gazette, 28 September 1871; CO 321/48, Robinson to Kimberley, no. 83, 8 September 1881, Census returns.

(26) PP, 1842, (479) xiii.1, Evidence of Hay McDowell Grant, 25 April 1842, p. 3; CO 260/59, MacGregor to Russell, 10

In 1844, Dakins also noticed that job or piece work was becoming common along the windward side of the island. Labourers were given pieces of land to hole, weed or harvest in a specified number of days or weeks. This enabled labourers to choose which days they worked and to engage the help of family members or other paid labourers to complete the job. One stipendiary magistrate estimated that job work paid twice as much as day labour.⁽²⁷⁾ It also gave labourers more protection during disputes as they could prove how much work they had performed. For example, on Union Estate, labourers made agreements with the overseer in front of another witness. During one dispute, the manager, Robert Chapman, complained about a labourer to the stipendiary magistrate on the grounds of non performance of work. The magistrate was able to settle the disagreement without punishing the labourer as the agreed task would take around sixty days and only eight days had passed. In this example, the labourer had agreed to plough a field of six and a half acres for fifteen dollars.⁽²⁸⁾

It is impossible to determine if this form of working affected men and women differently, as there is no evidence to indicate whether they were expected to perform the same or different tasks or piece work. However, it is possible

February 1840, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Polson's report; PP, 1884, (3840-1) xlvi, p. 118.

(27) CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 29, 6 June 1844, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Struth's and Dakins' reports; CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1852, Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book.

(28) CO 260/72, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 16, 7 May 1850, Sutherland to Campbell, 2 October 1848.

that piece work facilitated the introduction of gendered work taboos. Erna Brodber's research into women workers at the beginning of the twentieth century has revealed that women did not perform any strenuous digging on their own plots of land. In fact, even the hoes used for deep digging were taboo for women. Men would share the digging tasks, while women would repay them by doing the weeding and lighter tasks on the men's land. This sharing of the work load and reduction of the heavy work for women would not have been understandable if women were still expected to dig cane holes on the estates.(29)

Share cropping was not successfully introduced into the sugar estates. However, it was adopted on the cotton estate on Union Island. In 1882, Administrator Gore visited the island and claimed that none of the workers there received wages. Instead, they sold the cotton they produced to the estate owner. He claimed that because of the temporary migration of the majority of the men from the island each year, most share croppers were women. In 1910, the St. Vincent government bought the island and sold the land to the inhabitants as small holdings.(30)

(29) Erna Brodber, 'Afro-Jamaican Women at the turn of the Century', Social and Economic Studies, 35 (September 1986), p. 32.

(30) CO 321/57, Robinson to Kimberley, no. 11, 23 February 1882, Gore to Robinson, 8 February 1882; Janet Momsen, 'Land Settlement as an Imposed Solution', in Jean Besson and Janet Momsen (eds.), Land and Development in the Caribbean (London, 1987), pp. 52-53.

Wages.

Wages formed the basis for many complaints from labourers throughout the period studied. Immediately after the termination of the apprenticeship period, labourers on Calder estate attempted to organise a strike for better pay and conditions. The magistrate, John Nanton, intervened and persuaded the workers to agree to work for the daily wage of eight pence. As this was the rate paid at the beginning of apprenticeship and labourers had then been able to increase the rate to ten pence, they were not initially willing to accept a reduction. Furthermore, during the apprenticeship period, appraisals for early release calculated on the supposed earnings of labourers were also considerably inflated. Nanton pointed out that even a few months before the final abolition of apprenticeship, appraisals were being made based on an annual income of between fourteen and thirty six pounds, which was much higher than the ten to twelve pounds offered by planters after emancipation.⁽³¹⁾ Therefore, it was hardly surprising that labourers wanted much higher wages than those offered.

There was some concern by Colonial officials about income levels of Caribbean workers in the 1840s and 1850s. Some officers believed that agricultural wages in the Caribbean were far higher than in England, and this allowed Caribbean labourers a better standard of living for less

(31) CO 260/58, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 117, 27 August 1838, Nanton to Tyler, 18 August 1838; CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 196, 31 August 1837, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Pitman's Report, 1 July 1837; CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, no. 15, 14 May 1839, Nanton to the House of Assembly, 11 May 1839.

work. Planters and their supporters claimed that high wages resulted in reduced production as people in the Caribbean would only work to avoid starvation. Lieutenant-Governor Campbell wanted to see wages reduced and claimed that this could be achieved if taxes were increased and labourers were forced to work more to buy consumer goods. He stated that this would increase the power of planters over labourers and enable planters to reduce wages.(32)

Lieutenant-Governor Sergeant also believed that wages should be diminished, and he supported large scale immigration. Sergeant and his superior, Governor-General Hincks entered into a spirited debate on this issue in 1860. Hincks refuted Sergeant's claims and stated that labourers refused to work because of low wages and irregular payment. He further argued that it was unfair that labourers were forced to subsidise immigration through taxation as an increased labour force would harm rather than benefit estate workers. Hincks also suggested that it was unrealistic to compare labourers' wages in St. Vincent with those in Britain. Instead, St. Vincent rates should be equated with wage rates in the rest of the Caribbean. However, the Colonial Office supported Sergeant's view point and further immigration was permitted to St. Vincent. In fact, Hincks was proved correct. When sugar prices collapsed two years later, and several estates were abandoned, many creole labourers were forced to leave the island as there was no employment on the estates.(33)

(32) CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1852, Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book.

(33) CO 260/94, Hinks to Newcastle, no. 13, 14 April 1860.

In his comparative study of free labour systems, Eric Foner pointed out that when discussing Caribbean labourers, many British officials relied on the philosophies of the eighteenth century. These stressed that the poor would only be industrious if forced to do so through poverty. More modern ideas of the free market economy, which encouraged materialist aspirations of the poor, were not considered appropriate in debates concerning black labourers. Thus, the theories of Campbell and Sergeant echo the writing of the eighteenth-century writer, Arthur Young, who wrote, 'Everybody but an Idiot knows, the poor must be kept poor or they will never be industrious'. Hincks, despite his long years of experience in the Caribbean, was considered unrealistic in his claims that it was poor wages and not a lack of material drive that was responsible for a reduced labour force.⁽³⁴⁾

In St. Vincent, cash wages remained at the 1838 rates on most sugar estates until 1862. First-class labourers earned between seven and a half and eight pence per day if they were residents and ten pence if they lived away from the estate. Supervisors received around one shilling per day. Second-class labourers earned five pence. Some women worked on arrowroot estates rather on sugar estates because the daily rate was much higher, the work was lighter and they only needed to work part of the year. In 1844, Polson claimed that arrowroot estates paid double the wages of sugar estates. The allowances which had formed part of the

(34) Eric Foner, Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and its Legacy (Baton Rouge, 1983), pp. 15-16.

apprentices payment gradually diminished. As a result of the Sugar Duties Act of 1846, planters reneged on some customary allowances, such as free medical treatment, salt-fish and flour gratuities. In 1854, rum allowances were also stopped and, in 1862, there were attempts to cease payments of molasses and sugar. After 1862, some estates also reduced their wages and by the 1890s, the daily rate for adult males on some sugar estates was between five to six pence per day, although other estates retained the 1838 rate.⁽³⁵⁾

At some point during the period studied, women may have become classed as second-class labourers. During slavery they had dominated the first gang, and Grant's evidence to the Select Committee of 1842 shows that in 1839, many females still worked in the first gang. A few women were also able to become supervisors. However, as in the slavery period, the more highly skilled and therefore better workers were primarily men. Stipendiary magistrates did not report any differences in pay for men and women labourers until 1858, when they reported that women and children were paid less 'according to their powers of working'. This was not the pattern in Jamaica, where estate accounts reveal that women received lower wages as early as 1840.⁽³⁶⁾

(35) CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 53, 16 November 1844, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Polson's reports; CO 260/69, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 4, 26 October 1848; S.V.A. Archives, Dispatches, 91002 3/4, 19 January 1854, McDowell to Colebrooke. For details on the 1862 allowances, see chapter 10.

(36) CO 260/ Hinks to Labouchere no. 22, 7 May 1858, Eyre to Hinks, 19 April 1858; Rhoda Reddock, 'Women and Slavery in the Caribbean: A Feminist Perspective', Latin American Perspectives, Issue 44, vol. 12, no. 1 (Winter 1985), p. 75.

Wages were due at the end of every four weeks, when labourers were told how much they had earned. This system often resulted in disputes when labourers discovered how much had been deducted for absence or lateness. Under the Masters and Servants act, planters were permitted to fine labourers for a variety of reasons, including arriving late for work or not completing a specific task. Planter Robert Chapman, for example, fined his labourers fifty cents for every day that they were absent. He claimed that this was for rent. Furthermore, wages were often delayed because of the lack of funds available to planters, who did not consider the prompt payment of wages as a priority. One stipendiary magistrate even suggested that planters withhold wages owed to labourers who wished to leave their estate. As the cost of initiating a complaint was too high for most labourers, planters were therefore able to cheat their employers with impunity. Moreover, on estates that went bankrupt, labourers sometimes lost up to one year's wages. This was not the case for managers, whose wages were recovered for them after the estate was sold off. During the 1862 disturbances in St. Vincent, the non-payment of wages and the unfair deductions made by planters formed a major part of the labourers' grievances. However, in 1884, planters continued to refuse to initiate weekly payment to creole labourers, even though they had been persuaded to pay the indentured Indian labourers in this way.(37)

(37) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 89, 1 January 1863, Sutherland to Musgrave, 18 December 1862; CO 260/72, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 16, 7 May 1850, Sutherland to Campbell, 2 October 1848; PP, 1884, (3840-1) xlvi, Evidence by F. Othello, p. 119; CO 384/140, Robinson to Kimberley, no. 120, 26 December 1884. See also chapter 10.

Conclusion.

The collapse of the sugar industry devastated the lives of many Vincentians. Proprietors were forced to sell their estates to repay some of their creditors. The Cummings family, for example, once one of the leading families of the island, was forced to petition the Crown so they could retain one of their houses to ensure that an elderly widow was not forced into homelessness. The Sutherland family also lost their estates due to the non-repayment of the 1831 Hurricane loan. In all, thirty estates were sold under the Encumbered Estate Act.⁽³⁸⁾ Resident estate labourers experienced severe hardships. Because they were dependant on the estates for their own survival, many labourers were forced into a transient lifestyle, moving from one plantation to another, or to a new island to find work. Their attachments to family burial grounds were severed as estate residences became run-down, and employers could no longer guarantee their labourers a permanent home.

By the 1870s, most St. Vincent estates were in the hands of a few merchant companies. Planters remained entrenched in their determination to weaken their labourers' bargaining powers and economic prosperity. They complained frequently about the laziness of their labourers, but at the same time, they often reneged in wage payments and reduced the work available to creole labourers. They also resented

(38) CO 260/80, Colebrooke to Newcastle, no. 30, 3 May 1854. CO 260/73, 16 February 1850, Sutherland to Grey; Fraser, 'Development of a Peasantry' p. 34.

openly any attempts to improve labourers' material conditions. In 1874, a new tax was introduced to ensure that all Indian immigrants and also indigenous creole workers received medical care, and planters quickly petitioned against this, despite the obvious benefit to them. In 1881, they petitioned again against a tax on rum production, claiming that the country could not afford to spend money on public works. When one of the major share holders of DK Porter and Co. died in 1881, he left a fortune worth over £250,000, yet the company remained determined to minimise their contributions to the island's prosperity as a whole.⁽³⁹⁾

Conditions on plantations worsened significantly for estate labourers during the period covered in this study. Immediately after emancipation, estate labourers were able to achieve a degree of independence. Although wages were far lower in St. Vincent than in many other islands, labourers' access to provision grounds enabled many to save money and educate their children. However, after the 1860s, planters reduced wages, abandoned allowances and allowed estate cottages to fall into disrepair. Full employment was no longer readily available. Therefore, workers who were resident on estates experienced increased poverty and deprivation. In 1884, Goodluck Clarke claimed that St. Vincent labourers were 'fast approaching beggary and sorely oppressed'. Many of the hopes and aspirations of the first

(39) CO 321/3, Rawson to Kimberley, no 38, 24 April 1874; CO 321/48, Harley to Kimberley, no. 121, 12 December 1881; Memorial from Planter-Merchants to Gore, 24 November 1881; Gore to Harley, 30 November 1881.

generation of freed labourers were realised only for a short period. The abolition of slavery enabled them to escape from the crushing oppression of ceaseless, unrewarded toil and brutal, arbitrary corporal punishment, but many did not avoid poverty and hunger.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Women on estates had a variety of experiences. Those who were married or co-habited with their partner were sometimes able to avoid continuous work in the cane fields particularly before 1844. Their work on the provision grounds and as higglers supplemented their partners' wages. However, many of these women took employment on arrowroot estates for part of the year. Single women, particularly those with children, experienced the greatest hardship on estates. Because wages were low, these women had to continue as field hands on estates to entitle them to retain residency as well as grow provision crops to feed themselves and their children. The number of women living in poverty increased further after the 1860s, as large numbers of men left their families in St. Vincent to seek work in Trinidad, British Guiana, the Danish West Indies and later Panama. As the island's economy declined, few women experienced the expectations of abolitionists: that women would enter the domestic sphere and escape the degradations of field work.

(40) PP, 1884, (3840-1) xlv1, p. 119.

Chapter Four

The Formation of Free Villages.

After the abolition of slavery, many Caribbean labourers rapidly established independent peasant communities. In Jamaica, for example, where the number of apprentices was around 320,000, over 20,000 transactions involving plots under ten acres had been completed by 1845. This was also true for British Guiana, where by 1842, there were 1223 small-holdings in Berbice bought by some of the island's 15,000 ex-apprentices. In both these areas, there were large tracts of inexpensive land available to the freed slaves. This was not the case in some of the smaller islands. In St. Vincent, where apprentices numbered around 22,500, only 315 sales had been recorded by 1845, many for less than one acre. By 1897, only 1368 acres were in small-holdings of under twenty acres. This chapter will investigate the extent of labour withdrawal from estates in St. Vincent and the establishment of new communities. It will also examine the obstacles faced by free labourers who wished to purchase land and will analyse their choices of land and paid work.⁽¹⁾

(1) Thomas Holt, The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938 (Baltimore, 1992), p. 144; Rawle Farley, 'The Rise of Village Settlements in British Guiana', Caribbean Quarterly, 10 (1964), p. 59; CO 260/65, Grey to Stanley, no. 44, 5 December 1845, Stipendiary magistrates' reports; CO 260/66, Grey to Gladstone, no. 7, 20 March 1846, Lieutenant-Governor Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book; Janet Momsen, 'Land Settlement as an Imposed Solution', in Jean Besson and Janet Momsen (eds.), Land and Development in the Caribbean, (London, 1987), p. 50. For the St. Vincent 1845 figures, I have used the largest number of freeholds quoted by the

The Withdrawal of Labour.

Before and after the abolition of slavery, there were debates among British officials, planters and abolitionists concerning the feasibility of a free labour system in the British Caribbean. The most important of these debates took place within the British Parliamentary Select Committees of 1832 and 1842. The 1832 committee was formed in response to a surge of anti-slavery sentiment in Britain. The 1831 slave rebellion in Jamaica and the ensuing maltreatment of missionaries there partly contributed to these sentiments, as did the lack of amelioration policies adopted by the slave colonies. The committee called witnesses, including both pro- and anti-slavery supporters. It is interesting to note, however, that no slaves and no women were called, and this contributed to the basic weakness of the committee and its findings.

Olwyn Blouet has suggested that the aims of the committee were two-fold. Firstly, it wished to find out whether freed slaves would remain as wage labourers on the sugar estates. Would freed slaves be able to comprehend and embrace capitalist ideals which would necessitate the accumulation of material possessions and ensure that they would rely on wages to enjoy both essentials and luxuries? The second debate focussed on slaves' spiritual potentials. Could they be taught Christian values and could they acquire literacy and other educational skills?

magistrates and included thirty-six sales that had not completed the registration programme.

Supporters of slavery contended that slaves were 'a lazy set of persons' who would only work if they were coerced. They cited claims that no freed slave in the Caribbean ever worked on the sugar plantations, and that they migrated to urban areas. Abolitionists were unable to contest this claim, but failed to point out that the vast majority of slaves who either earned or were given freedom were not estate labourers in the first place. In fact, few slaves were described as labourers in the manumission lists sent to the Colonial Office. In 1827, there were three freed males listed as labourers, and of these, one, a 'mulatto' became a cooper while the others remained as labourers. Six women labourers were freed, and of these, two became farmers, two became seamstresses, one became a huckster and one remained as a labourer. Abolitionists claimed that as slaves already had strong materialistic habits, enjoyed fine clothes and furnishings, they would therefore remain as workers to ensure they had a decent standard of living.⁽²⁾

However, as Diana Paton has noted, the committee was made up of men, who did not enquire fully into the lives and expectations of female slaves. Questions were asked about slave women's sexual behaviour, domestic skills and interest in material possessions. The committee also expressed concern about the work that was sometimes expected of slave women, but it did not fully debate how women would react to

(2) Olwyn Blouet, 'Earning and Learning in the British West Indies: An Image of Freedom in the Pre-Emancipation Decade, 1823-1833', Historical Journal, 34 no. 2 (1991), pp. 391-409; CO 260/44, Brisbane to Bathurst, no. 10, 3 November 1827, Returns of manumitted slaves.

freedom. Questions concerning future working habits of slave labourers were phrased in masculine terms and concerned the ability of slave men to become bread winners and sole providers for their families. This bias reflects the inability of the committee members to envisage a society which differed from a middle-class English ideal. In fact in Britain, the family wage was not a reality for the majority of working class males, and among both urban and rural poor, women and their children contributed greatly to family funds.⁽³⁾

Planters were aware that the majority of field labourers were female, and that women were likely to leave estate work if they had young children and could earn a living growing and selling provision crops. However, planters were also aware that the committee would see this as a positive aspect of emancipation. Therefore, plantation managers did not stress the implications of the withdrawal of female labour from the estates during the committee hearings. Abolitionists, on the other hand, looked forward to the time when women would have access to their 'proper' sphere in life as wives, mothers and providers of domestic comforts for their families. However, abolitionists also did not discuss the effects that this would have on the cultivation and manufacture of sugar.⁽⁴⁾

(3) Diana Paton, 'Decency, Dependency and the Lash: Gender and the British Debate over Slave Emancipation, 1830-1834', Slavery and Abolition, 17 no. 3 (December 1996), pp. 163-184; Ellen Ross, 'Labour of Love: Rediscovering London Working Class Mothers', in Jane Lewis (ed.), Labour and Love: Women's Experiences of Home and Family, 1850-1940 (Oxford, 1986), p. 103.

(4) For abolitionists' visions of new gender roles for freed slaves, see, Clare Midgely, 'Free Men and Protected Women:

Before emancipation there was very little debate on how sugar would be produced without female labour. In St. Vincent this was not discussed in any of the Colonial Office dispatches, even during the Apprenticeship period when magistrates noted that many of the freed apprentice female field workers became higglers rather than labourers. In the newspapers that have survived, there was only one letter which broached the subject, and this was written by John Innes, an agent for St. Vincent and a member of the West India Committee rather than a Vincentian. Innes wrote a warning to planters in 1835 about the effects of closing the nurseries on the estates.

'When the mothers are free each will naturally attend to her own children, and thereby be deprived of the power, even if the inclination existed, of working in the fields. It is thus obvious that supposing (a supposition the realisation of which is however too extravagant to be entertained by any man of common experience) that the general gangs of the estates be disposed to work after the apprenticeship, the abstraction of the field labour of so many women and young persons would prevent the sugar planter from carrying on the business of his estate except on a very contracted scale.'⁽⁵⁾

Gender and Anti-slavery Ideology', Paper Presented to Gender and History Anglo-American History Conference, Institute of Historical Research, May 1993.

(5) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 21 November, 1835.

Plantation managers did not respond to his letter and his prediction became a reality on many estates when Apprenticeship was abandoned. The planters' unwillingness to retain estate nurseries made field work impractical for many mothers with young children, who during slavery often formed a significant number of the first gangs.

For more than forty years Caribbean historians have also been interested in the reasons behind the withdrawal of labour from the plantations. Many of the debates surrounding this topic have focussed on the pioneering works of Hugh Paget and Rawle Farley. Paget's work on 'The Free Village System in Jamaica' suggested that planter policies of forced evictions, high rents and rent-labour policies forced freed slaves to leave their homes on the estates and find alternative settlements and means of income. This theory, which is described as the 'push' theory, has also been supported by historians such as Douglas Hall, who used evidence from the Select Committee of 1842 to illustrate the effects of planter policies on freed people's decisions to relocate in free villages. However, Woodville Marshall, in his paper 'We be Wise to Many More Tings', delineated this theory as portraying the 'limited black': it fails to credit ex-slaves with visions beyond estate work and an attachment to burial plots and provision grounds.⁽⁶⁾

(6) Hugh Paget, 'The Free Village System In Jamaica', Caribbean Quarterly, 10 (1964), pp. 38-51; Douglas Hall, 'The Flight from the Estates Reconsidered: The British West Indies, 1838-1842' in Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (eds.), Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present (Kingston, 1993), pp. 55-64; Woodville Marshall, '"We be Wise to Many More Tings": Blacks' Hopes and Expectations of Emancipation', in *ibid*, pp. 12-21.

An opposing view was suggested by Rawle Farley. He believed that labourers chose to leave estates after abolition to escape from memories of slavery and degradation. His article, 'The Rise of Village Settlements in British Guiana', claimed that the desire for liberty and land were fundamental to freed slaves, and that where there was an abundance of land labourers were quick to move away from wage labour. Farley's theory, designated the 'pull' theory was represented by Marshall as describing the 'foolish black', because it suggested freed slaves gave up their homes, provision grounds and work as a reaction to the past rather than for future improvement. The theory has been further developed by Sidney Mintz, whose work on slaves as proto-peasants suggested that free villages were a development of slaves' provision grounds, and free labourers used skills that they had acquired as slaves to become independent freeholders. Jean Besson also helped refine this theory by hypothesizing that free villages were in many ways a continuation of resistance to slavery and plantation life and can be compared to the phenomenon of maroonage.⁽⁷⁾

The push-pull theories have been criticised for failing to take into account the diverse aspirations and situations of free labour. In his 1984 essay on labour withdrawal from

(7) Farley, 'The Rise of Village Settlements', pp. 52-61; Sidney Mintz, Caribbean Transformations (Baltimore, 1976), pp. 131-160. Jean Besson, 'Freedom and Community', in Frank McGlynn and Seymour Drescher (eds.), The Meaning of Freedom: Economics, Politics and Culture after Slavery (Pittsburgh, 1992), pp. 183-219. For a detailed over-view of the historiography of the post-emancipation period see Kevin D. Smith, 'A Fragmented Freedom: The Historiography of Emancipation and its Aftermath', Slavery and Abolition, 16 no. 1 (April 1995), pp. 101-130.

Dominica, Michel-Rolph Trouillot suggested that historians should examine the size and type of estates that lost most labourers and their wage and tenancy policies. He found that in Dominica, more labourers left large sugar estates and estates where wages were offered in cash rather than in share cropping. He discovered that over 1000 labourers quit estates in the first few months of freedom. However, his research failed to take into account the age and sex of labourers who first left the estates.⁽⁸⁾

Marshall's work on the withdrawal of labour from estates recommended an examination of the aspirations and expectations of labourers as well as appraising when they chose to leave the estates and where they decided to live. He suggested that freed slaves wanted a society which was radically different from slavery. They wanted access to legal rights, to control their own family structures, to be able to move about freely and labour only when they chose. They also wanted fair and decent wages and to retain control over provision grounds. Furthermore, they wanted to better their condition, materially, socially and educationally.⁽⁹⁾

In St. Vincent there was a two-stage withdrawal of labourers from sugar cultivation. The first withdrawal, which occurred in the first two to three years of freedom, was not for many a desertion of the estates but rather a departure from full-time estate labour. By examining not only the numbers of people who left estate work but also the

(8) Michel-Rolph Trouillot, 'Labour and Emancipation in Dominica', Caribbean Quarterly, 30 no. 3 & 4 (1984), pp. 73-84.

(9) Marshall, 'We be Wise to many more tings', pp. 14-16.

type of people, it is clear that age and sex were primary factors in this withdrawal. It was a movement to establish new family conditions. The second wave took place a few years later and involved a movement away from residence on the estates into free villages, but for many this did not include a total move away from estate labour itself. Rather, it can be seen as an initial attempt at social and economic improvement as well as a desire for independence and a better negotiating leverage.

During the first two years of freedom, there was a rapid decline in the numbers of estate workers in St. Vincent. In the ten years that followed, while some estates experienced a continued decrease in their numbers of labourers, the overall number of agricultural labourers increased slightly. The number of estate residents, however, decreased. Furthermore, by the 1870s, the number of people claiming to be agricultural labourers had dramatically risen, reaching levels comparable to apprenticeship.

Initially some people moved to new estates to join family and friends and others moved away from bad managers or in search of better conditions. As in Dominica, large estates in St. Vincent lost a higher proportion of their labourers. However, it is difficult to estimate how many men and women actually left estate work because of the looseness of the descriptions of workers which were used during this period. Planters often used the term 'labourer' to describe both field hands and skilled people, men and women. In 1839, planters were asked to compile the exact

numbers of people moving, but their figures were inaccurate and incomplete. According to the investigations made by the Assembly, there were 10,957 apprentices on the seventy-eight estates in St. Vincent on 31 July 1838. During the first year of freedom, 2275 people left their estates, some moving to other estates, others to the towns. The planters estimated that in July 1839, there were 8939 people resident on the estates and 6812 on the pay role. In their report, they claimed that those no longer working were 'the most part young or effective agriculturists.'(10) Stipendiary Magistrate Polson, however, claimed that they were primarily the skilled craftsmen from the estates, women and young people.(11)

Figures from Calder estate reveal that a large percentage of those who first withdrew from the estates were women. According to Hay McDowell Grant's slave returns for 1834, there were 134 women and 131 men on Calder estate. Of these, eighty-two women and forty-nine men were described as field labourers. In 1839 there were thirty-eight men and forty-seven women in the two field gangs. These figures show that on Calder few male labourers left the estate immediately after abolition. Women were still the majority of the field workers in 1839 but were more likely to have very reduced hours.

(10) The St. Vincent Chronicle and Public Gazette, 16 April 1839. See the appendix for details of labour withdrawal from 1838-1852.

(11) CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley, no. 14, 19 April 1842, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Polson's report.

Grant sought to obscure facts relating to the withdrawal of labour when he gave evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee of 1842 investigating labour in the Caribbean. According to a Vincentian newspaper, the Select Committee considered his evidence accurate, believable and without exaggeration. His manner and class background made him appear a credible witness and therefore his evidence was not examined very fully.⁽¹²⁾ However, along with other planters, he was determined to show that free labour was not successful. When he was specifically asked the number of male workers that had left the fields he replied, '8586 were the number of labourers working on the estates in 1841, 14,797 were the number apparently working in 1834.' Grant was no doubt aware that the members of the Select Committee would assume that the term 'labourer' referred to male field hands only. In fact, this figure also included women, children over six and skilled estate workers. The committee were therefore fooled into believing from his reply, that over 6000 men had stopped work.⁽¹³⁾

It appears that the majority of adults who first left estate work were women. In St. Vincent, according to the Returns of Slaves, there had been 9736 female slaves living on the estates in 1834. Of these, approximately 27 per cent were either under the age of six, too old to work or not

(12) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette, and Weekly Advertiser, 28 May 1842. The Gazette claimed 'His gentlemanly bearing persuaded the committee that he was one of their class and he was viewed as credible and influenced the entire committee to believe him'.

(13) PP, 1842, (479) xiii.1, Evidence of Hay McDowell Grant, 25 April 1842, p. 41.

employed as field labourers. This would mean that about 7100 female slaves were agricultural labourers.(14)

According to the 1844 census, there were 2515 female estate workers. It therefore appears that approximately 65 per cent of the women and girls who had been field slaves found alternative employment or sources of income in the first ten years after the abolition of slavery.(15)

The number of male agricultural workers in 1844 was 3886. In 1834, there had been 9027 male slaves on the estates. Approximately 5597 (62 per cent) of these males were either field hands or stockmen. This suggests that about 2167 men and boys, or 24 per cent of the total number of male field slaves had changed employment.(16)

Women were eager to leave estate work for different reasons. Not only did they have concerns over child care, but they also wanted to reap as much benefit as possible from their provision grounds and marketing, both occupations that would enable them to care for their families and earn an independent income. Also, insults and abuses that men and women faced in the fields were often excessive.

Anderson was horrified at the verbal abuse that planters

(14) T 71/500, Returns of the slaves in St. Vincent made up on the 1st day of August 1834. The estimates are calculated from the returns of forty estates.

(15) Woodville Marshall, 'The Social and Economic Development of the Windward Islands, 1838-1865' (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1964), p. 141.

(16) *Ibid*, p. 141 and T 71/500 Returns of the Slaves in St. Vincent made up on August 1 1834. I have calculated the number of agricultural labourers by averaging the number of labourers listed on forty estates of differing sizes and locations. These figures, therefore, are only a rough guide.

routinely used against field labourers. He wrote at the beginning of his employment in St. Vincent:

'It was on this excursion that I first saw a gang of negroes at work and heard, with feelings I cannot pretend to record, a word indiscriminately applied to my fellow creatures hitherto designative of the refuse of humanity'.(17)

Women had also been subjected to rape committed by planters and drivers in the fields and could be offered by estate managers as sexual partners to any visiting white men. Therefore, withdrawal from plantation labour was for some women a means of escaping from this form of degradation. Supporters of slavery denied that overseers and other white men were permitted to sexually abuse women. However, other contemporary observers of the slave system admitted that it was usual for visiting white men to be offered a slave woman for the night. It is probable that this form of exploitation continued after abolition as many women became dependant on planters for both their homes and their income. In his auto-biography, Samuel Smith, a field labourer from Antigua, claimed that women who remained working on estates were still sometimes subjected to verbal and sexual abuse, and he portrayed some of the attacks that women estate workers faced at the end of the nineteenth century.(18)

(17) University of Aberdeen, Manuscript, John Anderson's Journal, p. 11.

(18) The rape of female slaves was hinted at by missionaries, who could not discuss the issue openly for fear of offending their readers. However, in his diary, slave overseer and owner Thomas Thistlewood revealed that he and his contemporaries frequently sexually abused their slaves.

Similar facts have emerged from a more gendered approach to the study of the withdrawal of labour in Jamaica. Thomas Holt noticed that the initial withdrawal of estate labour was primarily by women. In the western parishes, missionaries found that women made up 84 per cent of those that stopped work on fifty-six estates.⁽¹⁹⁾ This was probably common throughout the British West Indies, as women shared common child caring roles and marketing skills. On the whole, planters did not openly admit that the reduction in the number of labourers on their estates was because females were withdrawing from field work. This was for the same reason that they did not discuss the issue before emancipation. Separate gender roles were considered not simply desirable, but actually fundamental to civilised society in early Victorian Britain. Planters tended to blame the decrease in labour on familiar myths such as the laziness of labourers and their lack of material drive. However, one planter did respond to a triumphant claim made by Reverend Knibb that women in the Caribbean had taken on domestic roles. He wrote to a local newspaper:

Thistlewood had sex with all the slave women he bought, including young girls newly arrived from Africa, and the wives of other slaves. He did not describe these attacks as rape, but it is unlikely that the women were all willing partners and it would appear that Thistlewood used rape as a means of controlling and intimidating his female slaves. Douglas Hall, In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica 1750-86 (London, 1989), pp. 20, 29, 32, 33, 37, 72, 74, 84, 87, 134, 135, 150, 181-213; Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey, The West Indies in 1837 (1838) (rpt. London, 1968), pp. 179-180; Keithlyn and Fernando Smith (eds.), To Shoot Hard Labour: The Life and Times of Samuel Smith, an Antiquan Working Man (Scarborough, 1986), p. 39.

(19) Holt, The Problem of Freedom p. 153.

'Mr. Knibb acknowledges, and glories in making the acknowledgement , that all women and children have been withdrawn from sugar cultivation;... Every West Indian proprietor wished the women to take their proper station in society, and the children to go to school; but at the same time the proprietary body are anxious to avoid extremes; they wish the women here to do what the labourer's wife does in Europe - work in the fields at those seasons of the year when employment is to be obtained. ... If immigrants are not to come here and women and children of this highly favoured clime are not called on to perform the work that is done by their equals in Europe, what is to become of sugar cultivation?'(20)

This letter basically sums up the planters' position regarding labour. They wanted to control a sufficiently large number of labourers to harvest their crops, but were not willing to retain their labourers during the quieter months.

Many of the women who left full-time estate work remained economically active. Some became full-time market gardeners, retailing their produce in the towns and estates. Others took advantage of the higher wages and reduced hours offered by arrowroot plantations, working only five months a year but receiving a much higher daily rate. However, as the previous chapter has suggested, a significant number of women remained on the sugar estates as labourers, and their

(20) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 1 August, 1840.

contributions to sugar production cannot be ignored. Their participation in field work, however, remained problematical to British officials. Lieutenant-Governor Campbell admitted that sugar cultivation could not be achieved without women, although he would 'fair see the female portion of the population more restricted to their natural sphere of occupation.'(21)

Men who left the estates often migrated. Some men left the island permanently, others travelled to Trinidad or other islands to find temporary work during the cropping period, and then returned home. Between 1839 and 1845, 959 people moved from St. Vincent to Trinidad. This migration continued throughout the period studied and was of particular note in the Grenadines. In 1871, Lieutenant-Governor Rennie stated that many men left the Grenadines for Trinidad during the crop season, returning in August or September. In 1882 also, Administrator Gore was struck by the absence of men living on Union island when he visited there. He was told that the men were working in Trinidad, while the women and children remained working as share croppers for the cotton estate.(22) Other men moved to the towns to work as labourers or porters or entered a trade, and others rented small plots of land and became arrowroot

(21) CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1852, Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book. See also chapter 6.

(22) Marshall, 'The Social and Economic Development of the Windward Islands', p. 151; CO 260/116, Rawson to Kimberley, no. 26, 25 April 1872, Lieutenant-Governor Rennie's report accompanying the Blue Book; CO 321/57, Robinson to Kimberley, no. 11, 23 February 1882, Gore to Robinson, 8 February 1882.

cultivators. Unemployment and under-employment were common problems for both men and women, despite the supposed labour shortage. Furthermore, work was not available all year, which forced men into travelling to find better rates of pay elsewhere.

It was unfortunate for the newly emancipated slaves that the political climate in Britain at the time was opposed to small-holdings which were seen as morally and physically damaging for the labouring classes. Therefore, English family members could not contribute to the family income by working at home.⁽²³⁾ Young English children were sent to work in factories and mines under appalling conditions to supplement the family budget. British officials were therefore prejudiced against labourers and their families in the West Indies achieving the independence that they had denied English rural workers and did not support any measures to assist labourers in acquiring freehold property. However, despite serious obstacles, many Caribbean labourers were able to purchase some land.

Free Villages and Freehold Land Purchases.

The second stage of withdrawal from plantation labour occurred during the 1840s and 1850s. Labourers who had saved adequate funds began purchasing small plots of land, or leasing larger tracts to grow staple and export crops. According to Stipendiary Magistrate Nathaniel Struth, the

(23) K.D. Snell, Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900 (Cambridge, 1985), p. 170. See also, Eric Hopkins, Childhood Transformed: Working Class Children in Nineteenth Century England (Manchester, 1994), p. 13.

acquisition of freehold land was for a typical St. Vincent labourer 'the desire of his heart'.⁽²⁴⁾ However, in 1897 a Royal Commission investigating poverty in the West Indies discovered that the lack of small-holders in St. Vincent was so severe that it had significantly contributed to the island's destitution.⁽²⁵⁾ The methods by which freeholds were acquired and the restrictions imposed on the formation of free villages reveal some of the reasons why so few former slaves in St. Vincent were able to become independent small-scale farmers.

Much of the research on the development of peasantry in the Caribbean has centred on the islands of Jamaica, Haiti and mainland British Guiana where local conditions, such as abundant land and abandoned estates, enabled ex-slaves to buy, rent or squat on small plots of land. In Jamaica in 1837, James Phillippo, a Baptist minister, pointed out that without the occupation of freeholds, labourers on sugar estates could never achieve independence from estate managers' oppressive measures. The actions of planters during Apprenticeship to retain control over labourers revealed that confrontations would be inevitable after full emancipation, and labourers would risk losing their homes and provision grounds if they attempted to negotiate better conditions. Phillippo was proved correct and in 1838, planters began to demand high rents and threaten eviction to curtail demands for decent wages.⁽²⁶⁾

(24) CO 260/65, Grey to Stanley, no. 16, 7 May 1844, Stipendiary magistrates reports, Struth's report.

(25) Momsen, 'Land Settlement as an Imposed Solution', p. 49.

(26) Mintz, Caribbean Transformations p. 160.

Many Jamaican labourers wanted to purchase freeholds to avoid evictions, but few planters were willing to sell land to them. To counteract this, Baptist ministers borrowed funds from Britain and began to buy up abandoned estates and marginal estate lands. These lands were then sub-divided into small house and garden plots and sold primarily to family groups who were members of the Baptist church. Early plans of Sturge village show that the plots were small and varied in size, and that the house plots were grouped together in the centre of the property. Villagers in Sturge Town paid about seven pounds for an acre, some paying in instalments. In this manner many free villages were formed in Jamaica in the early years after emancipation, centred around a church, with a school house established for the children.(27)

Within these villages, missionaries exerted a degree of control over the inhabitants, encouraging Christian principles of morality and demanding a degree of conformity from the residents. Inhabitants were expected to maintain certain standards in terms of the appearance of their homes, their dress, and their attendance at church. While free from the fear of eviction by disgruntled estate managers, village inhabitants could face social ostracism if they did not conform to missionary demands. However, the land was not expensive, and while the plots of land were too small to allow villagers freedom from wage labour, they ensured that villagers had a degree of self sufficiency. In addition,

(27) Ibid, pp. 161-166.

women with children could choose whether or not to abandon estate work in favour of growing and marketing food crops which they could manage alongside child care. Other Jamaican labourers were able to buy individual small plots of marginal estate land.(28)

In St. Vincent, because there were no Baptist missionaries and Wesleyan ministers did not take up a similar initiative, all the free villages that sprang up in the post-emancipation period were the result of the resolution of freed slaves. There were, however, several factors that limited their goals. Firstly, the geography of the island determined the feasibility of establishing free villages, with less suitable land available in the steep sided, narrow valleys of the west coast. The interior of the island was also unsuitable for the development of free villages because it is extremely mountainous and inaccessible. Vincent Spinelli, in his study of land use in St. Vincent, estimated that 43 per cent of the island is not suited to cultivation because it is too steep and he suggested that the population density of the inhabitable areas of the island after abolition was 339 per square mile. While planters from Charlotte parish threatened that freed slaves would retreat to the mountains and live as 'hoards of barbarians' unless fully restricted and controlled, labourers themselves showed no real inclination to move away from the commercial centres of the island.(29)

(28) Catherine Hall, 'White Visions Black Lives: The Free Villages of Jamaica', History Workshop Journal, no. 36 (Autumn, 1993), pp. 105-126.

(29) Joseph Spinelli, 'Land Use and Population in St. Vincent, 1763-1960: A Contribution to the Study of the

The second restriction on the acquisition of land was that, according to stipendiary magistrates, planters were originally reluctant to sell land to labourers, fearing that it would give them too much independence. This was especially true in the Carib district of Charlotte parish where, despite the abundance of land unsuitable for sugar, there were no opportunities for freeholds until after 1842. According to Struth, a stipendiary magistrate, the reluctance of planters to sell land was gradually reduced in the early 1840s when they realised that small-scale freeholders would continue to work on estates, and that labourers often moved to estates where land could be purchased. They also appreciated that free villages would reduce their own costs in terms of house repairs and medical allowances required by tenants. However, very few estates actually sold land to labourers, and the sales that were transacted were for mainly small house and garden plots. Many planters continued to refuse to sell, and they were described by the Royal Commission of 1897 as 'most successful' in denying labourers the chance to become freeholders. In fact, one of the measures put in place by the 1897 commission to alleviate poverty in St. Vincent was to pressure planters into selling small plots of marginal or uncultivated land at a reasonable price to labourers.(30)

Patterns of Economic and Demographic Change in a Small West Indian Island' (PhD Thesis, University of Florida, 1973), p. 261; CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, no. 12, 2 April 1839, Memorial from Alex Cummings, James Sutherland et al. 18 February 1839.

(30) CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley, no. 14, 19 April 1842, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Weight's report and Sutherland's report; CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 29, 6

Thirdly, the Colonial Office was also initially against the sale of land to labourers, reflecting the policy in Britain at the time. Allotments, common rights and small-scale peasant farming were gradually eroded during the nineteenth century in Britain as private enclosure acts increased the holdings and rights of large-scale land holders. According to Governor-General Grey,

'to give a poor man a fee simple in any small portion of the Earth's surface ... creates an interest unsuitable to his condition and to the progressive changes in the system of agriculture which are going on in progressive countries'.

This belief was echoed by Colonial Office officials who suggested that Crown lands should only be sold to 'larger proprietors'. The minimum plot of land that could be purchased was forty acres, and the prospective purchaser had to pay for the land to be surveyed and advertised. It was then sold by auction. These restrictions ensured that Crown land was not made available to labourers, while planters were able to buy the land that surrounded their estates very cheaply.⁽³¹⁾

By 1859, the Colonial Office was less opposed to selling small plots of Crown lands. There had been a shift in British perceptions of small-scale freeholders. The Colonial Office was also eager to re-settle large numbers of

June 1844, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Struth's report; Momsen, 'Land Settlement', p. 49.

(31) CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 29, 6 June 1844, Memo from Taylor, 12 September 1844; CO 260/111, Rawson to Granville, no. 704, 14 December 1869.

poor whites from Barbados to St. Vincent and suggested giving them portions of Crown lands. The local legislators were opposed, stating that the poor whites would become a burden to the colony. But Acting Lieutenant-Governor Sergeant claimed that the reluctance was really because the Legislature was aware that local labourers would be angry if white people from Barbados were given crown land free, although local people had been denied the right to buy any land. Despite local opposition the Barbadians were granted five acre plots of land, and many of their descendants still cultivate these plots in the Dorsetshire Hills.(32)

The continued refusal of the legislative bodies to have other Crown lands surveyed ensured that local labourers were unable to buy similar land. In 1870, the minimum size of an individual plot was reduced to twenty acres, but as there were no maps of the land, the majority of Crown lands purchasers continued to be planters buying up the land surrounding their estates. It was not until 1890 that any real attempts were made to allocate Crown lands to small-scale purchasers, and it was only after 1897 that this policy met with any success.(33)

The fourth restriction on land sales was the high prices that planters charged for even small plots. Small plots of land in St. Vincent sold for around £30 per acre. This was less than in Antigua and Barbados, but much higher

(32) CO 260/92, Walker to Newcastle: no. 40, 15 July 1859, Walker to Sergeant, 20 May 1859; no. 63, 14 December 1859, Sergeant to Walker, 8 December 1859.

(33) CO 260/112, Rawson to Granville, no. 33, 30 May 1870; Momsen, 'Land Settlement', p. 50.

than in Jamaica or Grenada. The table below gives estimates of average land prices of one acre in several islands during the post-emancipation period.

Table 4.
Average Cost of One-Acre Plots in the Caribbean after Emancipation.

Barbados	Antigua	Dominica	Grenada	Jamaica	Guiana	Trinidad	Tobago	St. Vincent
£60-200	£40-80	£1-3	£5-10	£4-20	£1-50	£1.10s-£13	£20	£30

Source: W. Emanuel Riviere, 'Labour Shortage in the British West Indies after Emancipation' Journal of Caribbean History 4, (May 1972) p. 18.

Throughout the Caribbean, there were restrictive taxes imposed on freeholders and leaseholders. There were also high taxes on consumer goods, especially those popular with the African-Caribbean labour force. In St. Vincent in 1844, a tax of one pound was inflicted on all small-holders and leaseholders had to pay ten shillings. This was amended a few years later, and small-holders and leaseholders with land worth less than L100 paid five shillings and those with land of over L100 value paid ten shillings. In 1850, small-holders and leaseholders with plots under two acres paid five shillings and plots between two and ten acres were taxed at ten shillings. In 1850, there were 2894 tax payers, and in 1853, when small-scale farmers were not taxed the number of tax payers decreased to 594. Taxes were also introduced on ownership of horses, mules and wheeled vehicles that were not used on sugar plantations and from 1860, arrowroot exports were heavily taxed along with sugar to help subsidise the immigration of indentured Indians.

Small-holders were again taxed on both their houses and land after 1869 to pay for British troops. Those growing export crops paid one shilling per acre, and those growing provisions paid six pence per acre. Houses were also taxed at five shillings for a house with two rooms and a further one shilling for each extra room. However, in 1874, Lieutenant-Governor Dundas decided to abolish the tax on small-holdings of under one acre and at the same time houses were also relieved of tax.(34)

It is likely that many people simply refused to pay these taxes. Each year, the Government Gazette printed lists of people who had not paid their taxes on time. In Jamaica, there were even riots when an over-zealous tax collector attempted to force the people in his district into paying. There were also violent protests over taxes in other islands. For example, St. Lucia, Tortola, and Tobago all experienced tax riots in the late 1840s and early 1850s.(35)

(34) CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 53, 18 November 1844, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Struth's report; CO 260/70, Colebrooke to Earl Grey, no. 3, 16 January 1849; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 6 July 1850; CO 265/3, Stipendiary Magistrates' Returns, Consolidated tables, December 1851, June 1853; CO 260/95, Hinks to Newcastle, no. 20 11 May 1861; CO 260/110, Rawson to Granville, no 658, 24 June 1869, Lieutenant-Governor Berkeley's report accompanying the Blue Book; CO 321/7, Rawson to Carnarvon, no. 32, 4 May 1875. See also O. Nigel Bolland, 'The Politics of Freedom in the British Caribbean', in McGlynn and Drescher, (eds.) The Meaning of Freedom pp. 131-132.

(35) Holt, The Problem of Freedom p. 205; Woodville Marshall, 'Peasant Movements and Agrarian Problems in the West Indies', in P.I. Gomez (ed.), Rural Development in the Caribbean (London, 1985), pp. 36-37; Bridget Brereton, 'Post-Emancipation Protest in the Caribbean: The Belmanna Riots in Tobago', Caribbean Quarterly, Vol. 30 (Sept-Dec 1984), p. 112.

One of the greatest initial aids to freed labourers' ability to purchase land was the demise of the sugar industry in St. Vincent. Some planters realised that land sales were an easy way of obtaining substantial amounts of capital. The sale of marginal estate land to freed slaves began in 1839. Small plots of land, rarely over one acre, were purchased by labourers from their employers. The earliest sales recorded in the Deeds register were at Layou, on the west coast where labourers bought small house plots from Robert Cowdrey; this became Cowdrey's Town, a suburb of Layou. Sales for Victoria Village, located close to Calliaqua in St. George, were registered in 1843. These sales were followed by plots sold to form villages on Career estate and Gomiers during the mid 1840s. During this same period, some people used capital or accessed credit to buy larger plots of land which they subdivided into smaller plots. Maria Coulter, for example, bought eighteen acres of land in St. Andrew near Campden Park Estate, for £420 which she sold as house plots of around one tenth of an acre to local labourers for around thirty to forty pounds. Some land sellers also revealed their personal vanity as well as financial desires in the land deeds, often naming new villages after themselves. Hence Cowdrey's, Dickson's and Chapman's are all reminders of early land speculators.⁽³⁶⁾

Plantation managers who were willing to sell land did not limit purchases to resident estate labourers. They also

(36) Details of village plot sales are taken from the St. Vincent Court House Land Sale Deeds, (hereafter Deeds) Vols. 1831-1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843-1844, 1845-1846, 1846-1850, 1850-1857, 1856-1857, 1857-1859, 1859-1860, 1861-1863, 1863-1865.

advertised in newspapers to encourage the migration of labourers from other areas. These advertisements reveal the changing policy of planters concerning land sales. Advertisements for 1838 and 1839 show the original reluctance of planters to divide plots, and planters used the threat of sub-divisions as a warning to encourage other planters to buy their land. For example in 1839, fifty acres of land were offered for sale in Bequia. The advertisement stated that if it was not sold by 16 July, it would be divided into small lots. However, in later sales, the land was offered immediately in lots to suit the purchasers. Land in Marriagua valley, for example, was offered immediately for sale in small lots in 1851. In 1855, three new villages were formed using land from the abandoned estates of Westwood, Spring and the Grove.⁽³⁷⁾

By the mid-1840s, mortgage holders also realised that land sales of marginal estate land would enable them to collect some of the debts owed to them. Court of Chancery rulings also began demanding that managers of estates designate suitable portions of land and sell them to labourers. These new settlements included a new suburb of George Town from land sold by Reverend Browne, owner of Grand Sable, which was once the largest and most impressive sugar estate in the island. Despite these rulings, however, some managers remained reluctant to sell to labourers. At Cane End estate, the manager was ordered to sell land to labourers, and while some sales were recorded to a few

⁽³⁷⁾ The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 6 July 1839; 23 August 1851; The St. Vincent Government Gazette, 21 June 1855.

labourers, this land was actually then transferred into trust for the manager's daughter.⁽³⁸⁾

The locations of the new villages reveal that freed slaves did not wish to withdraw from society as a whole. The villages were usually close to estates, which enabled villagers to continue to work as labourers. They were also close to roads or coastal routes to the main towns. Unlike the predictions made by planters from Charlotte parish, labourers did not chose to retreat to isolated regions in the interior of the island. Squatting by freed slaves was relatively uncommon, despite large tracts of unutilised land.⁽³⁹⁾

Land sales differed from region to region. On the leeward coast, where the valleys are steep sided, much of the land bought by labourers was located on the outskirts of the towns and formed suburbs of the existing coastal settlements rather than new free villages. Cowdrey's town and Layou Hill, for example became part of Layou. The Barrack lands sold by Reverend Morgan formed part of Barrouallie. Chateaubelair also expanded. These coastal suburbs gave the settlers access to Kingstown by boat so they could sell their food produce in the local markets and send export crops, such as arrowroot and some food staples to merchant houses or to ship captains involved in inter-island trade. There were also two Carib settlements in remote villages in the north of the island called Morne

⁽³⁸⁾ Deeds, 1846-1850, ff. 33, 321.

⁽³⁹⁾ CO 265/3, Stipendiary Magistrate's Returns, Consolidated tables, February 1846.

Ronde and Cape Rolle. These villages remain isolated, and can still only be visited on foot or by boat. By 1861, there were 507 freehold properties in the leeward parishes of St. Andrew, St. Patrick and St. David.(40)

In St. George in the south of the island labourers were successful in forming new villages. In this parish, which was close to Kingstown, many of the sugar estates' provision grounds were located in the mountains several miles from the estates. This land was ideally suited for small-scale producers, and large villages, including Victoria, Evesham, Ashburton and Gourian, were established with over 100 residents in each by 1844. A small village of Warrawarrow was also formed in a fertile valley close to Ashburton village. Here residents owned one acre plots along the sides of a small stream. As this village was not close to any estates, the residents were probably among those noted by Struth who lived by fishing and growing food crops. In 1844, Warrawarrow had forty residents. In St. George, a far higher number of the population lived away from the estates than in other parishes. There were twenty-one villages in 1841 with 343 houses and 1648 residents on estates. In 1861, there were over 4000 residents living in houses in the towns and villages of St. George, excluding Kingstown and Calliaqua. There were 524 freeholds, sixty leaseholds and

(40) Stipendiary Magistrates noted that labourers in these areas moved to the suburbs, but continued to travel to the estates each day to work, and to market by canoe on Saturdays. CO 265/3, Stipendiary Magistrate's Returns, Consolidated tables, February 1846; CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 54, 12 July 1862, Census returns.

327 properties housing tenants-at-will. Around 52 per cent of these villagers were female.(41)

Victoria village was originally formed after the purchase of fifty-four small plots in an area of around thirty acres. The plots cost between twenty-one and thirty-three pounds sterling, (\$101 to \$160) per acre. Only four of the original purchasers bought whole plots of one acre. Other purchasers bought half or quarter shares of a plot. In some cases, the plots were bought and subdivided by family members. For example, John McLeod bought an acre for his three children to have in equal shares, and Cordelia and Rodney Ben also shared a plot. In other groups, where the purchasers did not share a common name, they may have been relatives, friends or strangers. Peter Basil and his wife, for example, bought land with Venus Munro in 1843. His name was omitted from the original deed due to a clerical error, and the land was re-registered in 1847 to show joint ownership.(42)

Victoria village is situated on hilly ground close to the Windward highway, several miles from Kingstown. It flourished during the 1840s and 1850s and the population rose from 315 in 1844 to 610 in 1861, when the number of freeholds had increased to 113. Some of the original purchasers were also able to buy additional land in 1854 which would indicate that they enjoyed a degree of economic

(41) CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley: no. 29, 6 June 1844, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Struth's report; no. 53, 18 November 1844, Census returns; CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 54, 12 July 1862, Census returns.

(42) See appendix.

success. The small sizes of the plots would suggest that most of Victoria's residents remained as labourers on the neighbouring estates of Calder and Coubaimarou. But some may have rented larger plots of land to grow arrowroot or food crops.(43)

In Charlotte parish, land sales were delayed until after 1842. During the next decade, however, several large villages were set up near North and South Union, Sans Souci and Tourama estates and in the fertile Marriagua valley. Despite the early delays in sales, by 1861 there were thirty-eight settlements in Charlotte parish, twenty-five having more than ten houses.(44)

While there were quite a large number of sales, the small sizes of the plots suggest that most of the villagers did not achieve independence from estate work. Their villages gave them freedom to organise their family lives and they could dictate how often and for how long they worked on the estates, but they still required wages to survive economically. However, during the mid-1840s, labourers were able to continue to dominate the internal market economy. The small plots of land produced food for both retail and home consumption, and locally produced meat, fish, eggs, fruit and vegetables were expensive. Lieutenant-Governor Campbell saw these prices as a result of the producers belonging to the same class and claimed that they 'conspire' to keep the prices high. Local producers

(43) CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 53, 18 November 1844, Census returns; CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 54, 12 July 1862, Census returns.

(44) Ibid.

certainly fought against any reductions in prices. For example, when attempts were made to reduce the price of fish, fishermen threw their catches back into the sea as a protest.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Land deeds reveal that many of the villages in St. Vincent were established gradually, with individuals often paying for their plots by instalments. Descriptions of the villages reveal that the houses were scattered throughout the area, often quite a distance from each other. Few villages had roads and many could only be reached after a steep climb. This differs from the missionary villages of Jamaica and the organised group purchases of land by labourers in Jamaica and British Guiana. However, one village was established through a group purchase in 1854. This village, was established when one man bought Coubaimarou estate, and the deed stated that the land was bought with the expressed purpose of sub-dividing it. Three large plots were sold to individuals and a plot of just over one acre was sold to the Methodist church. The rest of the land was sold to labourers. The deeds do not state the size of these plots, but many prices were far lower than any other land sales recorded in existing deed books. The cheapest plot was sold for seven dollars, and the most expensive plot cost \$102, which was between £1 9s 2d to £21 5s sterling. In total, the land bought by labourers cost \$1710.68, which was over £356 sterling. Several of the purchasers already owned land elsewhere, and many shared

(45) CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1852, Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book.

surnames so were probably from the same family. This village was located along the windward coastal road and was probably 'Stubb's' village.(46)

The lack of plot sizes in the deeds for the sales of land at Coubaïmarou was not uncommon. Of 665 deeds of land sales to villagers located at the St. Vincent Registry office, sixty-one did not give the size of the plot sold. Therefore, it is impossible to state the average cost of land purchased by labourers, or the average size of plots. However, the deeds reveal that there were few opportunities for people to buy more than house and garden plots from planters, both because of the high cost of the land and the small areas actually offered for sale. Less than 10 per cent of sales where the plot size was recorded were for lots of one acre or more. According to John Davy, writing in 1844, only eleven freed people were able to purchase land of over ten acres and the Royal Commission of 1897 found there were only 143 proprietors of holdings between five and twenty acres.(47)

Land sales clearly demonstrate the unequal distribution of wealth between the sexes. Most of the land that was bought was registered by male purchasers. It appears that very few single women were able to save enough money to buy land in their own right, although where the occupations of

(46) Deeds 1856-1857, 1857-1859; CO 321/58, Robinson to Kimberley, no. 93, 29 September 1882, Goldsworthy to Robinson, 28 August 1882.

(47) John Davy, The West Indies before and since Slave Emancipation (1854) (rpt. London, 1971), p. 182; PP 1898, (39) li.(1) (C 8669) Report of the West Indies Royal Commission 1897, p. 93.

women purchasers were stated in the deeds, they were frequently from the skilled, domestic work-force. In fact, there were only 107 sales of rural land to single women and a further twelve plots were sold to joint male and females purchasers out of a total of 665 sales in the surviving deed registers. The lack of property rights for married women also restricted the number of females registered as land holders, because when married couples purchased land it was usually held in the name of the husband. When land was held in trust for the purchasers' children, however, there appeared to be no discrimination between male and female children. This suggests that early land purchasers wanted to ensure that their daughters had the same opportunities and independence as their sons. These purchases were early examples of family land, a pattern of land inheritance common throughout the Caribbean. The land itself was not divided, but all children had access to it. In Jamaica, women fared even worse. According to Veront Satchell, while women made up approximately 10 per cent of land conveyors in Jamaica during the last decades of the nineteenth century, a mere 4.5 per cent of the purchasers were female.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Labourers who were able to purchase land were still subject to oppression by planters. Stipendiary magistrates expressed fears that while there were many new villages and

(48) Jean Besson has studied family land in Jamaica and other regions in the British Caribbean. See for example, Jean Besson, 'A Paradox in Caribbean Attitudes to Land', in Besson and Momsen (eds.), Land and Development pp 16-17; Veront Satchell, 'Women, Land Transactions and Peasant Development in Jamaica, 1866-1900', in Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey (eds.), Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective (Kingston, 1995), p. 224.

small-holdings, few deeds were registered. Between 1840 and 1844, according to the magistrates, only 158 deeds were registered, yet the 1844 census revealed that there were 2824 residents in the villages. Because labourers purchased land from their employers or other respected residents on the island, many did not originally insist on having the sale registered. Small-holders also wanted to save themselves the expense of the registration fees. This led to a large degree of cheating. Planters with heavily mortgaged estates could not obtain credit and illegally sold land to raise cash. Others sold land although they did not themselves hold a legal title to it. For example, the land Maria Coulter sold to labourers was also used as security for loans. When the loan was called in, it was found that half of the land had already been sold. As some of the purchasers had received titles to their land, they were allowed to retain their land, but the rest was used to pay off Coulter's debts.⁽⁴⁹⁾

In another case, a widow sold land which had belonged to her husband, but for which she had no title. After her death the land passed to the Crown, and her deception was discovered. The Crown allowed those that had paid for the land in full to receive deeds and promised deeds to those who had not finished paying for the land when their purchases were completed. Stipendiary Magistrates also claimed that some planters encroached onto Crown land and then illegally sold plots to labourers. People who did not

⁽⁴⁹⁾ CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley: no. 29, 6 June 1844, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Struth's report; no. 53, 18 November 1844, Census returns; Deeds, 1856-1857.

obtain deeds were powerless to protect their investments if the land they had purchased was re-sold, so it is impossible to estimate how many people lost their land. It was undoubtedly quite common, and, by the mid 1840s, magistrates noted that people were insisting on receiving deeds. Deed records also reveal that as frequent fraud cases were exposed, purchasers began demanding legal titles to land they or their parents had paid for several years before. In the 1850s, several families requested that land they had bought in the 1840s was registered in the deeds.⁽⁵⁰⁾

The Encumbered Estate Act, which came into operation in 1858, also helped spur small-holders to register their plots. The first encumbered estate sale for the British West Indies was Arnos Vale estate in St. Vincent. This estate, which had its own natural harbour, large expanses of flat land and was close to the capital, was sold for £10,050. In fact, a few years previous to its sale, one of the owners had offered small parcels of land for sale in the newspapers without the permission of the mortgage holders or the other owner. These adverts were met by counter adverts by the mortgage holders warning purchasers that they would have no legal title from these sales.⁽⁵¹⁾

(50) CO 260/90, Hinks to Labouchere, no. 93, 14 December 1857, Walker to Hinks 21 November 1857; CO 260/65, Grey to Stanley, no. 44, 5 December 1844, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Weight's report; CO 265/3, Stipendiary Magistrates' Returns, Consolidated tables, December 1846, February 1847.

(51) Adrian Fraser, 'Development of a Peasantry in St. Vincent, 1846-1912' (M.Phil thesis, University of the West Indies, 1980), p. 32; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 22 December 1849; 13 April 1850, 15 June 1850.

It was originally hoped that the Encumbered Estate Act would revitalise the sugar industry by enabling local planters to purchase debt-free estates and modernise production. However, the result was almost the direct opposite. By the early 1890s, one London based-merchant house, D.K. Porter and Co., had bought almost two thirds of the encumbered estates and owned over one-quarter of the best land in the island on their twenty-two estates. Of the 44,000 acres of cultivatable land in St. Vincent, 30,000 acres were held by only ten owners. Porter and his followers refused to sell any marginal land to their employers. Furthermore, when sugar prices declined in the 1880s, Porter and Co. refused to consider any innovations and switched to arrowroot, flooding the market and halving the price.⁽⁵²⁾

Villagers sometimes experienced hostility and aggression from planters. William Smith, for example, opposed the acquisition of land by labourers. He alleged in 1846, when he was manager of Henry's Vale, that villagers were responsible for stealing timber and other building materials from local churches. Smith also stated that in all the areas where there were villagers, managers had been forced to import labourers from Madeira as local people refused to work on the estates. In 1851, his antagonism towards labourers increased when he became the owner of Clare Valley estate on the leeward coast. He claimed that the local villagers refused to work for him and used to

(52) Adrian Fraser, 'Peasants and Agricultural Labourers in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 1899-1951' (PhD Thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1986), pp. 31-32.

trespass on his land to reach the beach. Smith further claimed that they were all smugglers and used the coast to take goods to the French islands in exchange for liquor. He was ordered by the police magistrate to allow the villagers access to the beach which was Crown land. As a result of his disagreement with villagers, all the residents on his estate moved to other areas, and he was forced to abandon cultivation.(53)

Robert Chapman was another planter who acted aggressively towards neighbouring villagers. He was accused of encroaching on one woman's land in the Dorsetshire hills and in 1855, his actions against a small-holder in Sion Hill resulted in several days of rioting in Kingstown. He had confiscated some of her washing that had blown onto his land. To retaliate, she took some of his canes which had been thrown onto her land but Chapman had her arrested and tried. The lack of fencing and clear boundaries resulted in tensions between planters and their neighbouring villagers.(54)

LeaseHolds.

While the plots of land purchased by freed labourers were often very small, some were able to rent larger plots of land to grow export and food crops. However, this did

(53) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 2 January 1847, 9 January 1847; CO 260/89, Hinks to Labouchere, no. 50, 6 May 1857, Smith to Hinks, 25 January 1857.

(54) CO 260/102, Walker to Cardwell, no. 268, 12 September 1864, Memorial from Mrs. Hill; CO 260/84, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 66, 10 December 1855. See also chapter 5.

not guarantee them a high standard of living. On the windward coast, in Charlotte parish, the earliest village was a leasehold village in the Marriagua Valley, which became known as Mesopotamia. Here, land suitable for provision crops is within a day's walking distance of Kingstown and Calliaqua, and many of the residents did not chose to work on the estates. Stipendiary Magistrate Struth claimed that over 1000 people were living in the free village in 1842, but this is likely to have been inaccurate: the 1844 census reported 319 residents in the village. Struth also claimed that the inhabitants were 'mere drones' living in 'rude cottages and apparently doing little or nothing'. A Wesleyan missionary also voiced his concern over the residents in 1842 when he was unable to raise funds to build a chapel in the valley. These descriptions of village inhabitants reflect both their poverty and the unease that members of the English middle classes felt when describing labourers who had gained some independence.⁽⁵⁵⁾

Land rentals were popular with planters as they could charge high rents and could still retain a degree of power over their tenants. After emancipation, land was being rented for two to three pounds an acre and in 1852, Campbell stated that rent for an acre of arrowroot land was £3. 6s. Before the emancipation of slavery, arrowroot was primarily grown by slaves for domestic use. In 1839, however,

(55) CO 260/61 Grey to Stanley, no. 14, 19 April 1842, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Weight's report; WMMS Box 140, File 1842, no. 47, Banfield to General Secretaries, 12 July 1842; CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley: no. 14, 19 April 1842; no. 23, 17 October 1842; CO 260/62, Grey to Stanley, no. 12, 17 April 1843; CO 260/63, Grey to Stanley, no. 44, 23 October 1843, Stipendiary magistrates' reports.

newspaper advertisements appeared calling for arrowroot and promising high prices for all grades of the crop. Because it was simple to grow and manufacture and was not labour intensive, it was a popular crop for leaseholders.

Production increased steadily during the 1840s and almost doubled between 1843 and 1844, when exports rose from 147,281 pounds to 285,434 pounds, making arrowroot the second largest export crop. Of the 490,837 pounds of arrowroot exported in 1852, 93,905 pounds were produced by small-scale farmers.⁽⁵⁶⁾

In fact, the success of arrowroot farmers during the 1840s had negative repercussions for other small-scale farmers in later years. Sugar estate owners began converting their land to arrowroot and managed to inundate the markets resulting in a collapse in the price. In 1861, Lieutenant-Governor Sergeant claimed that most arrowroot was produced by large estates as the low prices had made it impossible for small-scale producers to compete. According to Wesleyan missionaries, many peasants put all their land into arrowroot in 1877, neglecting provision crops. However, the price again slumped, and this ruined many families. Consequently, by the following year, many people were desperately poor. They could no longer afford decent clothes to attend church, and some were forced to migrate to Trinidad to find work. This was also a problem in the 1880s

(56) Davy, The West Indies p. 182; CO 260/66, Grey to Gladstone, no. 7, 20 March 1846, Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book; CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1852, Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book; CO 260/95, Hinks to Newcastle, no. 20, 11 May 1861.

when many more sugar estates converted to arrowroot and saturated the market completely.(57)

Many leaseholders had to contend with high rents and low prices for crops such as arrowroot and sugar. In 1865, London Thomas, who leased land in Charlotte parish, petitioned the Lieutenant-Governor because of the poverty and lack of rights experienced by people in his district. He claimed that he had to pay a high rent for his land, that his tax was even higher than his rent and, in addition, he had to pay over eight shillings per barrel to manufacture his sugar. St. Vincent had no central mill, and despite efforts made by Lieutenant-Governor Rennie to have one built, planters refused to consider it. Rennie claimed that planters were opposed to any improvements in public works and manufacture. This was without doubt because the main beneficiaries of a central mill would be small-holders and the owners of the smallest plantations. In the 1884 Report to the Select Committee of the British Parliament, some labourers complained of frequent evictions from land leased from estates. There was no protection for tenants, and some people rented land from others who had leased large tracts from the plantations, which could lead to border disputes as well as evictions. Labourers working on leased Crown lands also objected to high rents, one man claimed he paid £10 8s 4d for twelve acres in Cumberland Valley, which is on the leeward coast. He pleaded that Crown lands should be sold

(57) WMMS Synod Minutes, Box 164, St. Vincent Minutes, 1877 and 1878; Fraser, 'Development of a Peasantry' p. 60.

so 'the poor might find work to keep them from pecuniary distress'.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Conclusion.

Stipendiary magistrates described the steady increase in the number of residents in free villages after 1842. In 1844, 2824 people were reportedly living in villages, and there were 44 new settlements. In 1851, there were fifty-nine villages with 6498 residents and in the 1861 census, there were 122 settlements, although several had only one or two houses. There were 10,891 people living on the estates and 20,864 in the towns and villages. As the villages grew, they required a police force, and by the mid-1840s, one or two constables were stationed in all the principal villages. Most constables were men, but in 1847, there were two women constables in Charlotte parish. By 1855 Victoria had five constables and Evesham had four, which reflects the growth of these villages. The villages also had small shops and liquor stalls by the 1850s. These, despite the dominance of African-Caribbean women as traders and hucksters, were not owned by creole families. Madeiran immigrants, who as Europeans had greater access to credit, owned many of the small shops in the villages.⁽⁵⁹⁾

However, the development of a significant and independent peasantry was delayed until after the

⁽⁵⁸⁾ PP 1884 (3840-1), xlv, pp. 118-125.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 53, 18 November 1844, Census returns; CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 54, 12 July 1862, Census returns; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 13 February 1847; 24 June 1854.

intervention of the British Government in 1897.⁽⁶⁰⁾ While there was an initial decrease in the number of field labourers on plantations, this can be partly explained by the withdrawal of women and children from field work and the migration of male workers to Trinidad and British Guiana, rather than the establishment of a thriving peasant community. In addition, many small-holders, either through choice, or because of a lack of permanent work, continued working on the estates as part-time labourers.

Nigel Bolland has suggested that it was not population density that determined the freed slaves' ability to form peasant communities, but rather the control that planters were able to maintain over the land. He stated that freedom should be examined in terms of the 'dialectic relationship' between the control of land and the control of labour, and he revealed how in Belize a small group of planters were able to thwart attempts by freed slaves to become independent peasants. In St. Vincent, also, despite a low population density, by the 1880s most of the land was controlled by a very small number of planters, who refused to sell labourers marginal plots. Furthermore, while some labourers were able to buy plots from land-holders in the 1840s, whose creditors were eager to recuperate some of their loans, many of these plots were too small to allow the purchasers any real independence. Moreover, when estates were purchased by merchant houses, these sales of marginal

(60) In fact, the attempts by the government to impose land settlement on St. Vincent, because of mis-management and a lack of trust and communication between agricultural labourers and the government, were considered by the government to have failed. Momsen, 'Land Settlement' p. 52.

land decreased. It was this planter domination of land that forced many labourers to leave the island and pushed many other into poverty.⁽⁶¹⁾

It is clear from the evidence available that freed slaves in St. Vincent did not experience the life of ease and laziness so graphically and offensively caricatured by men like Thomas Carlyle. Vincentian labourers experienced a brief spell of prosperity in the early 1840s, when work was available and wages were actually paid in full. However, as work opportunities declined and estates had little money to pay wages, poverty increased. The land bought by labourers gave them independence from planter interference and originally enabled them to choose where and when to work and how to organise their family work load. But few owned enough land to become completely free from the precarious fortunes of the sugar industry, and many lost their land as a result of debts. In 1884, labourers complained that high taxes on freeholds and the high rents charged to leaseholders penalised labourers with ambitions.⁽⁶²⁾

(61) O. Nigel Bolland, 'Systems of Domination after Slavery: The Control of Land and Labour in the British West Indies after 1838', Comparative Studies in Society and History, 23 (1981), pp. 591-619. This article was argued against by William Green, who claimed that Belize was not a suitable area to support Bolland's argument, that the labourers' prosperity was tied to the survival of the plantations and that the dialectic theory ignored the impact that the British Government had on labour relations in the Caribbean. See William Green, 'The Perils of Comparative History: Belize and the Sugar Colonies after Slavery', Comparative Studies in Society and History, 26 (1984), pp. 112-119; William Green, 'The Creolization of Caribbean History: The Emancipation Era and a Critique of Dialectic Analysis'. in Beckles and Shepherd (eds.), Caribbean Freedom pp. 28-40.

(62) PP 1884 (3840-1) xlvi, pp. 118-125. In Carlyle's 1849 paper 'Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question', he claimed that peasants in the West Indies lived idle lives

However, land ownership remained a central goal for many labourers. In her work on peasant communities in Martinique, Christine Chivallon has suggested that land acquisition was partly a response to feelings of alienation experienced by plantation labourers. The purchase of freeholds gave ex-slaves space not only to improve their material condition, but also to gain a 'collective identity'. This idea is echoed in Mimi Sheller's work on the post-emancipation period in Jamaica and Haiti. She has suggested that 'cooperation, black autonomy, and new collective identities emerged at the village level and contributed to political change'. Samuel Smith also suggested that the free villages in Antigua gave labourers a sense of pride and achievement. This was also true for villagers in St. Vincent. Despite the small size of land purchased by labourers and the poverty they continued to face, the autonomy and sense of self worth that their ownership of land gave them ensured that villagers were at the forefront of many labour disputes during the post-emancipation period. Village residents used petitions, strikes, threats and rioting to guard their rights. They supported the efforts made by estate labourers for better conditions as well as acting on their own to protect their higher wage rates.⁽⁶³⁾

eating an abundant supply of pumpkins. See Holt, The Problem of Freedom p. 280-281.

(63) Christine Chivallon, 'Space and Identity in Martinique: Towards a New Reading of the Spatial History of the Peasantry', in Environment and Planning D: Society and Space (1995), vol. 13 pp. 289-309; Mimi Sheller, 'Peasants and Politics in Post-Emancipation Haiti and Jamaica', paper presented to Society of Caribbean Studies, July 1997; Smith, To Shoot Hard Labour pp. 30, 54. For further details

Chapter Five.

Immigration Schemes.

After the abolition of slavery, planters throughout the British Caribbean complained that they were unable to cultivate sugar without a reliable and constantly available labour force. They believed that free labourers were likely to be unreliable unless they could in some way be coerced to work when the planters demanded them. Therefore, planters attempted to bind their employees to the estates through tenancy regulations and imposing penalties on labourers they considered to be recalcitrant. For example, in Jamaica, planters served mass eviction notices to force labourers to sign binding labour contracts. These efforts proved inoperable in many islands with large tracts of unused land or where the number of labourers was inadequate. Many Jamaican labourers moved into free villages after they received eviction notices, and Vincentian workers changed employers or migrated to other islands. Therefore, planters sought means to introduce bound labourers who could be forced to work at critical periods and could not wander away from the estates when wages were reduced and labour was not required. As K. O. Laurence pointed out, immigration of indentured labourers had both short and long-term goals. In the short term, planters hoped to remedy the shortage of labour. However, in the long term, they also hoped to introduce sufficient labourers to produce a surplus, thus reducing wages by limiting their workers' bargaining powers.

This chapter will analyse the various immigration schemes adopted by Vincentian planters to curtail the labour shortages and keep the estates supplied with dependent labourers. It will also examine the working and living conditions of the indentured labourers.(1)

The Demand for Labour.

It is impossible to determine accurately the full extent of the withdrawal of labour from the plantations because, even in 1849, there were allegations that planters continued to under-report the number of labourers that they employed. Figures that are available suggest that the withdrawal of many young men and women, women with children, skilled artisans and children, and the reduced hours performed by other labourers significantly depleted the number of cane labourers. However, the number of plantations in operation also decreased. In 1828, on the main island, there were ninety-eight estates under cultivation but only eighty-seven by 1854.(2) Also, while the number of labourers initially fell, the quality of their labour increased as the work force no longer included pregnant and nursing women, the elderly and children. In fact, the number of labourers increased after the late 1840s as villagers and young people began to seek work on the estates to increase their family income. Local census

(1) K.O. Laurence, Immigration into the West Indies in the Nineteenth Century (Kingston, 1971), p. 7.

(2) Adrian Fraser, 'Development of a Peasantry in St. Vincent, 1846-1912' (M.Phil thesis, University of the West Indies, 1980), pp. 9, 25.

returns indicate a significant rise in the number of people who considered themselves agricultural labourers, although many of them were probably part-time workers. In the 1844 census, 7677 people were described as estate labourers. In 1852, this had risen to 8185. In 1861, 12,855 people were listed in the census as agricultural labourers and there were 14,503 agricultural labourers listed in 1871. These figures may include people who only worked part time, but they suggest that by the 1860s, the number of agricultural labourers was comparable to levels during slavery.(3)

Sugar production was lower in the years after emancipation, and plantation managers suggested that more dependent labourers would solve their production problems. They also proposed that immigration was the only means open to them to procure new labourers, despite the increasing creole population. Their demand for immigrant labour was supported by the Colonial Government. In 1840, after the initial withdrawal of labour by women and children, the Assembly was encouraged to enact an Immigration Bill to enable St. Vincent to receive Africans from captured slave ships and from Sierra Leone. Planters also recruited labourers from Madeira in the 1840s.(4)

(3) CO 260/71, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 37, 11 October 1849, Campbell to Colebrooke, 8 October 1849; CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 53, 18 November 1844, Census returns; CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1852, Census returns; CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 54, 12 July 1862, Census returns; The St. Vincent Government Gazette, 28 September 1871, Census returns.

(4) The St. Vincent Chronicle and Public Gazette, 16 August 1839; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 2 May 1840; CO 260/59, MacGregor to Russell, no. 28, 20 October 1840.

In the mid-1850s, there were renewed requests for labourers as the demand for sugar rose. Lieutenant-Governor Eyre claimed that with immigrant labour, St. Vincent would be able to double sugar production and compete with slave-based countries. Lieutenant-Governor Sergeaunt echoed Eyre's claims in 1860, stating that creole labourers would not work, and therefore the island had no choice but to employ immigrants. Governor-General Hincks, on the other hand, was opposed to immigration, and believed that low wages were responsible for the reduction in the labour force. In 1858, when planters proposed paying African labourers one shilling a day if they agreed to work for six days a week, Hincks claimed that this showed that low wages were responsible for the depleted work-force. He suggested increasing wages of all labourers to between one shilling and one shilling and two pence to discourage the emigration of many labourers to other Caribbean territories. In 1860, he further pointed out that wages in St. Vincent were on a par with those in Barbados, yet St. Vincent had a labour shortage and Barbados had a surplus of labourers. However, Hincks was not supported in his ideas by the Colonial Office and the St. Vincent Legislature initiated new export taxes to pay for indentured labourers from India.⁽⁵⁾

A large proportion of the island's revenue was spent on immigration schemes. From 1845 to 1848, for example, over £5287 was spent on importing labourers from Madeira. About half was raised in taxes, and the balance was paid by

(5) CO 260/91, Hinks to Labouchere, no. 22, 7 May 1858, Eyre to Hinks, 15 April 1858; CO 260/94, Hinks to Newcastle, no. 7, 4 February, 1860.

plantations which received labourers. Between 1856 and 1860 a further £10,799 was spent importing African labourers, and in 1861, over L4225 was raised to procure labourers from India. Planters who received Indian labourers contributed L1807: the rest was taken from export taxes and other revenue. Arnold Thomas has estimated that by 1890, St. Vincent had spent over L80,600 on Indian immigration. This was money that the colony could not afford, and services such as roads, health and education were neglected to finance immigration. In 1856, for example, no money was raised for education or for the hospital, as the money voted for these purposes was not available. In fact, the General Hospital remained closed until 1858 due to lack of government funds. Funding for immigration took precedence even after 1863, when unemployment levels were high among creole labourers. The high costs of immigration were also common in other countries. In Trinidad, between 25 to 35 per cent of the revenue was spent on immigration in the 1860s, and in British Guiana, the figure was 20 to 30 per cent.⁽⁶⁾

There were also private schemes to encourage labourers from Europe and smaller Caribbean islands. One of the earliest schemes was an attempt to employ British ploughmen.

(6) CO 260/69, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 12, 15 November 1848; CO 260/96, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 59, 29 November 1861; CO 260/91, Hinks to Lytton, no. 46, 30 August 1858; CO 260/85, Hinks to Labouchere, no. 7, 4 March 1856, Eyre to Hinks, 29 February 1856; CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 27, 28 April 1862; Arnold Thomas, 'The Whites and the Browns: A Comparative Study of Portuguese and Indian Indenture in St. Vincent, 1845-1890', Paper presented to the Association of Caribbean Historians, Surinam, 1998 p. 16; Laurence, Immigration into the West Indies p. 64.

Several planters living along the windward coast brought British families over to St. Vincent and employed the men at £30 per year. This venture was a failure as many of the men took advantage of the opportunities available to whites and found easier and better paid employment. Others succumbed to alcohol abuse and found the combination of a hot climate and cheap rum debilitating.⁽⁷⁾

More successful private schemes involved the transfer of labourers from other West Indian colonies. People arrived from Barbados, St. Kitts and Montserrat, where land was scarcer than in St. Vincent. Some of these migrants were brought over by planters who paid for their passage. Others crowded into small boats and arrived at their own expense. Caribbean migrants received non-resident wages for the first six months and then, when their provision grounds were established, their wages were reduced to the same level as other resident labourers. Since no records were kept of these migrants, it is impossible to estimate how many were involved and whether they remained in St. Vincent, returned to their home lands or migrated to other islands. It is probable that many hundreds of workers were involved, as in 1851 stipendiary magistrates noted that 118 people had arrived that year from St. Kitts. According to the 1871 census, there were 2727 residents in St. Vincent who were born on other West Indian islands.⁽⁸⁾

(7) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 28 March 1840; CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley, no. 14, 19 April 1842, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Polson's report.

(8) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 7 June 1845; CO 260/77, Hamilton to Grey, no. 5, 20 February 1852, Speech by Campbell to the House of Assembly; CO 260/90, Governor-General Hinks to Labouchere, no. 99, 24

Government-Sponsored Schemes.

Africans were the first immigrants to arrive on a government-sponsored scheme. There was initial concern that a large number of Africans would have a negative influence on the local population. Colonial Office letters reveal that many English people considered Africans 'savage' and some Colonial Officers feared that African labourers could move to isolated areas of the island where they would retreat to a 'semi-barbaric' life style. This belief was so strong that it was not questioned or contradicted within the dispatches.

The European residents of St Vincent all prided themselves on the positive influences that they imagined their proximity had bestowed on the African-Caribbean work force. Examples of this discourse can be seen in Governor-General Grey's 1842 dispatch during a debate on the introduction of Africans. He feared that 'large numbers of both sexes in a rude and almost savage state, must in some way thwart and throw back the advances of small communities towards civilisation and comfort.' In the 1850s, Lieutenant-Governor Campbell also asserted that Africans arrived in St. Vincent as 'mere savages' and then gained 'all the advantages of civilisation' when they worked on sugar estates. However, he also warned that Africans should not be allowed to move into free villages. He described a typical African as 'a wandering demi-savage, whose habits

December 1857; CO 263/5, Stipendiary Magistrates Returns, Consolidated table for June 1851; The St. Vincent Government Gazette, 28 September 1871, Census returns.

are repugnant to any regular employment and who will therefore subsist, half on charity and half on the produce of such shifting and desultory labour as is little if at all preferable to total idleness'. These statements were echoed by Wesleyan missionary Reverend Wrench who claimed that West Indians were fifty years in advance of Africans in terms of religion and intelligence. These descriptions of Africans reveal the narrow perspective that limited many English men from understanding and empathising with people from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. They help explain why there were too few attempts to protect indentured labourers from ill-use.⁽⁹⁾

Despite their prejudices, the local Legislature sought Colonial Office approval for their Immigration Act, and, in 1842, 110 Africans arrived and were allocated to different estates. According to the Immigration Act, when first employed on an estate, adult Africans were to receive weekly rations of three pounds of salt fish or two pounds of salt beef or pork, and daily rations of one pound of bread, three pounds of yams or plantains, and four pounds of potatoes or breadfruit or half a quart of rice. They should also receive wages of two pence per day, a house and a quarter acre of provision grounds. Children were to receive half rations and wages if under fifteen years old, and quarter rations were given to children under six years old. After six months, their wages were doubled and rations were

(9) CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley, no. 14, 19 April 1842; CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1852, Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book; WMMS, Box 142, File 1848, Wrench to General Secretaries, 21 August 1848; Laurence, Immigration in the West Indies p. 15.

halved. At the expiry of their contracts, they were employed on the same terms as creole labourers. In all, 1036 Africans migrated to St. Vincent between 1842 and 1862.(10)

Because many of the African immigrants were children, planters asked for African children to be apprenticed on the estates and for the period of indenture for adults to be increased to three years. Using the stereotypes that were familiar to the British, planters stated that since Africans arrived in St. Vincent as wild savages, it took a year for them to be trained and civilised and to learn the rudiments of English. Therefore, planters claimed, they needed the extra two years' labour to recoup the costs of their efforts to 'civilise' the Africans.(11)

The apprenticeship of children was a particularly difficult issue. By 1834, the apprenticeship of children as agricultural labourers in Britain had been reduced and even pauper children were rarely apprenticed to farmers. This was for two reasons: firstly, because farmers found it expensive to feed children, and, secondly, the Poor Law Commission had found that children apprenticed on farms were often exploited and degraded. Furthermore, Campbell had forbidden the local Legislature from introducing a clause

(10) CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley, no. 23, 17 October 1842; CO 260/70, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 13, 12 April 1849; G.W. Roberts and J. Byrne, 'Summary Statistics on Indentured and Associated Migration Affecting the West Indies, 1834-1918', Population Studies, 20 (1966), p. 127.

(11) CO 260/72, Governor-General Colebrooke to Grey, no. 22, 15 May 1850, Campbell to Grey, 30 April 1850; CO 260/77, Governor Hamilton to Pakington: no. 5, 20 February 1852; no. 17, 24 July 1852, Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book.

allowing the apprenticeship of Madeiran children because he believed that this would lead to 'much wretchedness and hardship'. However, as Monica Schuler's study on African labourers in Jamaica has revealed, concern for African children's welfare was minimal. In Sierra Leone, children rescued from the slave ship and considered orphans were put under increasing pressure to either agree to work in Sierra Leone as apprentices or migrate to the Caribbean as indentured labourers.(12)

In St. Vincent, planters used the argument that as many African children were without parents, they should be apprenticed to protect them from moral degradation. The Legislative Council claimed that girls in particular could be exposed to 'the influence of seduction and pernicious advice, and without the protection of a Master .. they may fall early victims to disease and vice'. Lieutenant-Governor Campbell supported their claims.(13)

Campbell was not interested in protecting African children from the 'wretchedness' of plantation life, and his support of the planters reasoning is incongruous for two main reasons. Firstly, it directly contradicted both Campbell's arguments concerning the apprenticeship of Madeiran children and his debate the following year with the Bishop of Barbados concerning the negative effects that

(12) Eric Hopkins, Childhood Transformed: Working Class Children in Nineteenth Century England (Manchester, 1994), p. 14; Monica Schuler, 'Alas Alas Kongo': A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865 (Baltimore, 1980), pp. 23-25.

(13) CO 260/73, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 21, 24 June 1850; CO 260/75, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 24, 18 June 1851, Minutes of Her Majesty's Legislative Council.

agricultural work had on female sexual morality. This philosophy echoed similar calls for the removal of women in England from agricultural gangs. Secondly, it denied the experiences of many African girls, who were raped during slavery. European men were described as being suitable moral guardians, despite the reality that many who worked as plantation managers were themselves single with illegitimate families and no interest in religion. In fact, a large number of the immigrants from Africa were under eighteen, and planters wanted to control their labour for as long as possible. When the Immigration Act was amended to enable magistrates to apprentice African children on estates, it could not actually be enforced as the Africans refused to sign any contracts.⁽¹⁴⁾

Migrants from Madeira first arrived in St. Vincent in 1845. Although they were imported through private schemes, the local Legislature voted to pay bounties on each person that arrived. Madeiran migrants were mainly in family groups but included some young men. The lack of regulation in the scheme resulted in claims of kidnapping and false promises by immigration agents in Portugal. Furthermore, many of the people who arrived were from the towns and had no agricultural skills. Throughout their indenture, these families found life on the plantations to be intolerable. In the first year, 481 men, 380 women and 441 children arrived. The adults were expected to work for three years

(14) CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1853: Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book; Bishop of Barbados to Hamilton, 15 July 1852; Ivy Pinchbeck, Women Worker and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850 (1930) (rpt. London, 1969), pp. 87-90.

and received wages, housing and provision grounds. Over 2100 people migrated to St. Vincent from Madeira between 1846 and 1864.(15)

Government authorities originally valued the Madeiran immigrants. They described Madeirans as hard working and very honest and praised them for sending their children to work on the estates. Chief Justice Pemberton Hobson believed that this would have a positive influence on creole labourers whose own children did not work in the fields. However, this praise was short lived and like creoles and Africans, Madeirans proved too independent for the planters' needs.(16)

Indian labourers were first recruited to St. Vincent because planters found the outcome of Madeiran and African migration unsatisfactory, and because they believed that there would be an abundant supply of workers from India. The idea was first officially debated in 1858, when the House of Assembly stated that St. Vincent planters would be willing to employ mutineers who were being transported by the British from India. This plan was not successful, but in 1860, an Immigration Act was approved by the Colonial Office. In 1861, the first immigrants from Madras arrived and between 1861 and 1880, 1145 Indians were imported. By 1918, despite widespread unemployment and destitution among local labourers, a further 1327 people had been imported from India. This was a far lower figure than elsewhere. In

(15) Thomas, 'The Whites and the Browns', pp. 4-5.

(16) St. Vincent Court House Grand Sessions Minuters Book, 1846-1859, 3 November 1846.

Grenada, for example, 3200 Indians were recruited and in St. Lucia the figure was 4354, which was higher than the number of creole labourers in 1853.(17)

The terms of Indian indenture differed greatly from those of the Africans and Madeirans. The length of service was initially five years, and Indians had to remain on the estates as 'industrial residents' for this period. Furthermore, they could not travel off their estate without permission and even when their indenture was over, they could not legally move to any of the other islands in the Caribbean. Those that agreed to remain as indentured labourers for a further three years were entitled to a return passage to India or a cash payment. They were also to receive free housing, medical attendance and wages of ten pence per day. In 1874, the terms of indenture altered and Indians had to remain for five years as industrial residents on their estates and could receive a free passage home if they completed a further five years labour on their estates. Moreover, in an attempt to dissuade many labourers from leaving St. Vincent or settling in the towns, labourers were given a bounty of ten pounds in addition to a free return

(17) CO 260/91, Hinks to Stanley, no. 24, 7 May 1858, Eyre to Hinks, 16 April 1858; CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 128, 12 May 1863, Musson to Musgrave, 2 May 1863; CO 260/95, Hinks to Newcastle, no. 24, 17 June 1861, Musson to Musgrave, 7 June 1861; Roberts and Byrne, 'Summary Statistics on Indentured and Associated Migration', p. 127; Laurence, Immigration into the West Indies p. 26; Michael Louis, '"An Equal Right to the Soil": The Rise of a Peasantry in St. Lucia, 1838-1900' (PhD thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1981), p. 57.

passage if they agreed to sign for the second five-year term.(18)

The majority of labourers were adult males but there were some women and children. In the first shipment of labourers, there were 160 men, sixty-two women, thirty-four children and four babies. Out of a total of approximately 1926 labourers who arrived between 1861 and 1871, 587 were females and 1339 were males. Men and women were supposed to receive the same allowances and pay rates, but children were given half rations. Adults were also allocated a living space of around fifty square feet, while married couples received quarters with private bedrooms. The first group of immigrants were divided among eleven estates, all but one on the windward coast.(19)

An Immigration Agent, later referred to as the Protector of Indians, was also employed to inspect the estates with Indian labourers at regular intervals and plantation managers were supposed to keep full and detailed records of the Indian's work, food, and medical conditions. In fact, medical facilities were almost non-existent and the records were never fully kept. Planters resisted and resented any attempts to regulate their control over indentured labourers in the same way as earlier managers had

(18) Thomas, 'The Whites and the Browns' p. 10-13; CO 384/102, Rennie to Kimberly, no. 15, 11 March 1874.

(19) CO 260/93, Walker to Newcastle, no. 61, 10 December 1859; PP 1876, (789), liii, Returns on the Numbers of Coolies Introduced into the West Indian Colonies.

refused to comply with inspections during the apprenticeship period.⁽²⁰⁾

Living Conditions.

While planters were eager to employ immigrants, few were also willing to take on the responsibilities required of them. A lack of empathy towards agricultural labourers, one of the legacies of slavery, may explain the harsh treatment meted out to many migrants. Planters were also very limited in their financial resources and may have felt that their contributions to bounties and taxes alleviated them from their financial responsibilities towards their indentured labourers.

The death rate among Africans was particularly high. For example, in 1849, seventy-seven of the 234 newly-arrived Africans died during a small pox epidemic despite the availability of an effective vaccine. In 1850, fifty-four people died on one ship and in 1862, it was estimated that over 11 per cent of indentured Africans died during their first year in St. Vincent. Those who survived the crossing and first year often then faced poverty and unemployment. An examination of the conditions on estates employing Africans reveals the lack of care offered to them. In 1852, for example, a stipendiary magistrate noted that out of the 275 African labourers who had completed their period of indenture in 1851, only 125 remained working continually on the estates after their contracts had expired. Their daily

(20) CO 260/99, Walker to to Newcastle, no. 128, 12 May 1863, Musson to Musgrave, 2 May 1863.

wages ranged from four pence to eleven pence, but on eleven of the sixteen estates where Africans were resident. their average daily rate was below eight pence. In addition, many had no provision grounds, and those who did often had only a quarter of an acre.(21)

Africans were offered little protection by stipendiary magistrates and lived in isolation on many different estates. A major problem for them was that, since many were rescued slaves, they arrived in St. Vincent with few or no family ties. As St. Vincent had mainly small estates, the arriving Africans were divided into small groups and sent to several different plantations. Friendships forged on the ships and in Sierra Leone were severed and sometimes even family members were separated. It is also noticeable, that many of the children were placed on estates where there were no African adults. As a result, many Africans were lonely and isolated. They could not speak English, and unless there were fellow countrymen and women on their estates, they had no opportunities to talk their own languages. On one estate in 1849, for example, several women ran away and were later discovered living with countrymen on other estates. They had originally been placed on a plantation where there was only one African man. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that some chose to abscond, either to

(21) CO 260/70 Colebrooke to Grey, no. 28, 6 August 1849; CO 260/73, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 21, 2 June 1850; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 30 September 1854; CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 128, 2 May 1863, Immigrant agent's report; CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1852, Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book.

the African village or to estates where their friends were working.(22)

While there were no real attempts by the Colonial Office or local magistrates to ascertain the real working conditions of African labourers, enquiries revealed that conditions on the estates were especially harsh for many Portuguese and Indian labourers. In 1846, sixty-nine of the 945 newly arrived Madeiran migrants died, while others were covered in sores and ulcers. This prompted an enquiry, but the limits of this enquiry were superficial and cursory. The stipendiary magistrates in charge of the investigation made little effort to discover the full extent of the Madeirans' suffering and were determined to apportion no blame on the planters. Furthermore, assisting the stipendiary magistrates in their enquiries were some of the planters who employed Madeirans and the doctors who were employed by the planters. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the enquiry resulted in no prosecutions or other further action.(23)

The stipendiary magistrates did not themselves visit the estates but relied on planters to send in reports on their immigrants. Therefore, although the reports do not reveal the true conditions of the Madeirans, they do show a staggering indifference to human suffering, as well as the

(22) CO 260/73, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 26, 3 June 1850; Colebrooke to Campbell, 20 September 1849; Polson to Campbell, 6 October 1849; CO 260/94, Hinks to Newcastle, no. 35, 25 July 1860.

(23) CO 260/67, Grey to Gladstone, no. 4, 15 January 1847; PP 1873, (12) 1, Immigrants and Liberated Africans Introduced to the West Indian Colonies, 1843-1873, p. 3.

jaundiced and prejudicial view that planters held about the labourers themselves. Alexander McLeod, Robert Sutherland and William Cummings reported from the windward coast that on most estates, mortality among the Portuguese was 'only of a trifling extent'. On other estates, they reported that some people died of fever, others of dysentery. The deaths of two children, who died shortly after their mother, particularly show the lassitude of the planters. The children died of neglect. The report blamed the deaths on a 'want of a Mother's care and attention', but this also suggests that little effort was made by the plantation managers to care for these children themselves. This apathy further emphasises the unsuitability of planters as moral guardians for immigrant children.

It was on the leeward coast that most deaths occurred, and these were mainly on Cane End estate. Here twenty-six of the fifty-eight Madeirans who arrived in January 1846 died during their first year. On this estate, the Madeirans lived in squalor. Their homes were situated in marshy land and surrounded by refuse. The manager, James McFie, claimed that he paid them no wages for their first six months, but supplied them with food instead. The diet he gave them was far from satisfactory. It comprised of pork, flour, rice and saltfish. As the people were used to a diet of mainly vegetables, this change in their eating habits did not improve their health. Many of those who died suffered from bowel complaints and worms. Others were covered in ulcerated sores that did not heal. When many became sick, McFie took them to the Isle a Quatre, an island close to the

coast, to give them a change of air. However, while they were on the island, they were only given cornmeal to eat, so many of them weakened further and died.

Despite the poor diet, inadequate housing and rigorous work load that the planters inflicted on the Madeirans, planters, stipendiary magistrates and the Lieutenant-Governor agreed that the Madeirans themselves were responsible for the high mortality rate. McLeod, Sutherland and Cummings wrote, 'the amount of mortality was much augmented by the backwardness of the immigrants to make known their complaints until a late period'. They further claimed that 'the want of cleanliness on their persons and habitations renders them liable to sores and various diseases'. McFie was even more vehement in his attack on the migrants. He cited 'their own filthiness by keeping their homes in a shocking state, making a temple of ease of it' as one cause of their distress. Furthermore, he blamed their habit of sleeping naked on the increase of their illnesses. He wrote, 'They indulged in their filthy habits of stripping themselves naked both before and during their sickness'. The report also blamed the Madeirans' way of cooking for the high mortality rate. Lieutenant-Governor Campbell went further: he blamed their deaths on their ages. He claimed that as many were already old, infirm or children, the number of deaths were 'by no means excessive, but the reverse'. This incident may not have been unique. In 1865 The Witness newspaper reported hearing of further

acts of cruelty committed against Maderians on the leeward coast.(24)

The experiences of Indian labourers were remarkably similar. Not only did they endure similar appalling living conditions, but they were also initially held responsible for their own mortality. Indian labourers encountered many problems in settling into life on the estates. Managers complained that Indians performed less than two thirds of the daily tasks performed by creoles. As a result, planters decided to reduce their wages and set their own level of pay, despite the illegality of this action. On Rutland Vale, for example, the manager decided to pay his Indians only half their wages, as he considered that they only did half the work set them. Indians on other estates also frequently complained that they did not receive their full wages, and the situation was worsened on estates where the wages were only paid once a month as managers sometimes made unfair deductions. Again, this was not unique to St. Vincent. Verene Shepherd has shown that similar actions were undertaken by planters in Jamaica. In addition, Kusha Haraksingh's research revealed the tensions that arose as indentured Indians collected their wages from the pay table each pay day. Indians also complained that they had been unfairly deceived about conditions in St. Vincent before they left India. Wages in St. Vincent were considerably lower than in other islands. In Jamaica, for example, the male wage rate was one shilling and six pence, and the female rate was nine pence. In Trinidad the minimum wage

(24) Ibid; The Witness, 2 February, 1865.

for men and women was set at one shilling and one penny. One immigration agent in St. Vincent was shown printed forms which the Indians received in India promising wages of ten and a half pence to fifteen pence per day, yet few earned even the ten pence stipulated in the Immigration Act.(25)

Many Indians also found the work expected of them to be too arduous. On some estates, Indians worked in gangs on a daily basis, while on other estates they were employed at task rate. Many labourers initially complained that the tasks set for them were too difficult. It is possible that plantation managers gave Indian labourers heavier tasks to perform. Indians originally worked separately from creole labourers, but when Immigration Agent Bennett persuaded planters to mix Indians and creoles, he found that complaints about task work reduced, and Indians began requesting task work rather than daily work. However, it was also true that many of the indentured labourers were too weak to cope with the work load expected of them. This was especially true for women, few of whom were able to keep up with the men and earn a full days wage.(26)

(25) CO 260/96, Hinks to Newcastle, no. 53, 15 November 1861, Musson to Musgrave, 2 November 1861; CO 384/102: Rennie to Rawson, no. 11, 26 February 1874, Immigrant agent's report; Rawson to Carnarvon, no. 77, 29 September, 1874, Immigrant agent's report; CO 260/118, Rawson to Kimberly, no. 11, 22 April 1873, Immigrant agent's report; Verene Shepherd, Transients to Settlers: The Experience of Indians in Jamaica, 1845-1950 (Leeds, 1993), p. 50, 59; Kusha Haraksingh, 'The Worker and the Wage in a Plantation Economy: Trinidad in the late Nineteenth Century', in Mary Turner (ed.), From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves: The Dynamics of Labour Bargaining in the Americas (London, 1995), pp. 224-238.

(26) CO 260/118, Rawson to Kimberly, no. 41, 3 September 1873, Immigrant agent's report; CO 384/102, Rawson to Kimberly, no. 77, 29 September 1874, Immigrant agent's

Indians also had to adjust to a new diet and new regulations on how they organised their homes. The immigration inspector, E. Musson, described their early diet as 'garbage' because they ate tamarind, roots, leaves and other plants. He also described Indians as having 'great filthiness of habit', claiming that they had to be 'coerced' into keeping their homes clean. The Immigration Act stipulated the type of housing that should be made available to Indians. The Act also stipulated that planters should be responsible for maintaining the houses. In fact, few estates offered their labourers decent housing, and the immigration agents of St. Vincent ignored the rapid deterioration of estate cottages and barracks.⁽²⁷⁾

Indian women suffered greatly in St. Vincent. Despite all the problems that planters had previously experienced in trying to persuade creole mothers with young children to work, few estates made provisions for child care. This made it difficult for many of the women to fulfil their contracts. One woman refused to sign a contract and her husband requested permission to be allowed to pay for her passage from India to release her from indenture. Other women were less fortunate and had to combine child care with work, which resulted in them earning reduced wages. Many

report; CO 384/140, Robinson to Kimberly, 8 November 1882, Report by R.P. Cropper.

(27) CO 260/96, Hinks to Newcastle, no. 53, 15 November 1861, Musson to Musgrave, 2 November 1861; CO 260/118, Rawson to Kimberly, no. 41, 3 September 1873, Immigrant agent's report; CO 384/102, Rawson to Kimberly, no. 77, 29 September 1874, Immigrant agent's report.

women earned little or no money and became seriously malnourished.(28)

Hunger was not the only problem that Indian women faced. They also had to confront sexual aspersions and were considered by officials as immoral. Officials in many of the islands that received indentured Indians entered into a similar dialogue with the British Colonial Office. According to Lieutenant-Governor Rennie, Indian women who chose migration came from a class which was 'not very rigid in their morality'. There were at least two Indian men to every Indian woman, but according to Rennie, these few women 'considering the class to which they mostly belong, are quite sufficient for the men they accompany'. In other words, each woman should be expected to provide at least two men with sexual relations. In Jamaica, this view was also prevalent, and Indian women were described as 'women of doubtful character'. In Trinidad, there was also concern over the moral status of the women recruited as indentured labourers. Indian women were therefore open to sexual attacks and afforded little protection from exploitation because of this view on their sexual mores.(29)

(28) CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 32, 2 May 1862, Musson to Musgrave, 20 November 1861; CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 128, 12 May 1863, Musson to Musgrave, 2 May 1863; CO 384/140, Robinson to Kimberly, 8 November 1882, Report by R.P. Cropper.

(29) CO 260/114, Rawson to Kimberly: no. 54, 22 July 1871; no. 61, 12 August 1871; Shepherd, Transients to Settlers p. 50; Rhoda Reddock, 'Indian Women and Indentureship in Trinidad and Tobago, 1845-1917', in Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (eds.), Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present (Kingston, 1993), p. 226.

In 1870, one episode reveals the perilous position of many Indian women, who were without the protection of their families or the support of their employers. Saberchanney, a labourer on Argyll estate, was held on the floor by several men and flogged eighteen times on the back by Samuel Parsons, an English overseer. She was punished in this way for refusing to have sex with one of the Indian drivers. Saberchanney did not complain of her treatment. In fact, Parsons was only prosecuted because a carpenter witnessed him assaulting another Indian and reported the incident to Lieutenant-Governor Berkeley.⁽³⁰⁾

Stories concerning harsh treatment of Indians occasionally surfaced in Colonial Office reports. In 1878-1879, details emerged of the appalling living conditions that Indians suffered in Grenada. The report stated that many Indians who had contracted yaws were thrown off the estates and left to die in the streets. A similar picture emerged in St. Vincent. In 1882, when Lieutenant-Governor Gore was on leave, the Governor-General from Barbados became concerned about the rise of poverty in St. Vincent. He therefore took advantage of Gore's departure and sent the St. Lucian protector of Indians to investigate conditions on the estates. The protector, R. P. Cropper, reported that poverty and disease were widespread, and living and working conditions were below the stipulations of the Immigration Act. Yaws was common and he found labourers on several estates, and in particular Cane End, severely 'weakened in

(30) CO 260/112, Rawson to Granville, no. 22, 28 April 1870, Berkley to Rawson, 23 April 1870.

body and depressed in spirits' so they could not manage a full days work. On Upper Adelphi estate, Cropper alleged that all the Indians were emaciated. Furthermore, he revealed that the conditions of many immigrant homes were atrocious. Cropper ordered several buildings to be condemned, and on one estate claimed that one dwelling was too disgusting for him to even enter. He described houses on Carapan estate as 'filthy and wrecky from roof to floor' and, on most estates, ordered that the houses should be instantly repaired. Moreover, he revealed that many immigrants were being cheated out of their wages. In addition, Cropper described the women on Lot 14 estate as 'particularly wretched'. Unable to work a full day, they could not sufficiently feed themselves and their children.(31)

Gore reacted to Cropper's report by attempting to minimise and trivialise some of the issues raised by Cropper and by denying responsibility for other problems. He claimed that the death rate among Indians was low, so this indicated that conditions were better in St. Vincent than elsewhere. Moreover, he claimed that the houses could not be described as 'miserable' as 'the coolies' ideas of comfort were not the same as Cropper's. He further stated

(31) The Witness, 1 May 1879; Laurence, Immigration into the West Indies p. 54; CO 384/140, Robinson to Kimberly, no. 111, 8 November 1882, Report by R.P. Cropper. Cane End was the estate where many Madeirans had died in 1849, see footnote (24).

that the doctors were responsible for the health problems because they did not visit the estates regularly.(32)

Indians had limited means of appealing against cruelties and abuse. As industrial residents, with no legal rights to leave their estates without the permission of the manager, indentured labourers faced punishment for even trying to expose their complaints. Furthermore, as the magistrates and planters belonged to the same social class, some Indians were tried in court by their employers' friends. However, some Indians attempted to formally protest about their treatment, although Indian women were not visible in either of the two organised protest marches and one strike that took place in St. Vincent. In 1861, a group of male labourers from one estate marched into Kingstown to demand a reduction in their work load. Their leader was sentenced to twenty days hard labour for breaking his contract. In 1873, seven Indians were convicted of breaking their contract after they attempted to strike on Cane Grove Estate. Their leader was George Gordon who was possibly a creole. Indians did not attempt a group protest again until 1882, when the working conditions for many had become intolerable, and they feared that they had been cheated out of their return passage to India. In October, about thirty male labourers marched from Argyll and Calder estates into Kingstown to protest to Lieutenant-Governor Gore. However, because they had left their estates without permission from their employers, magistrates had the protesters arrested,

(32) CO 384/140, Robinson to Kimberly: no. 111, 8 November 1882, Gore to Robinson, 24 October 1882; no. 120, 26 December 1882.

and the ringleaders were fined five dollars each for being away from their estates without a pass. In many ways, despite the actions of the magistrates, this protest was successful. It resulted in a petition to the Secretary of State, which prompted the decision to provide return passages to India for over 1000 people.(33)

Indians also used more subtle ways to protest about conditions. The most common action was referred to by immigration agents as 'skulking' or 'idleness'. For example, out of the 258 labourers living on eleven estates in November 1861, only 111 were at work. Forty-eight were women and children at home, sixty-one were ill, fourteen were absent from the estate and twenty-four were 'skulking'. In 1871, Indian labourers were reported as working only 93,354 days, out of a total of 154,774 days. They spent over 15 per cent of their working days in 'idleness'. This working pattern was common throughout the indenture period and reflects both the Indians resistance to work and the planters' continued inability to provide and enforce a full working week for their employees. Violent acts were unusual among indentured Indians, but there were also occasional reports of arson and assault committed by Indians.(34)

(33) According to The Witness, Police Magistrate Hawtayne, who was also a planter, arranged to have his indentured labourers tried in the courts of his personal friends. The Witness, 22 September 1864; CO 260/96, Hincks to Newcastle, no. 53, 15 November 1861, Immigrant Agent Musson's report; CO 260/118, Rawson to Kimberly, no. 41, 3 September 1873, Immigrant Agent Bennett's report; CO 384/140, Robinson to Kimberly, Confidential, 8 November 1882, The Witness, 19 October 1882; Thomas 'The Whites and the Browns', pp. 14-15.

(34) CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 40, 26 May 1862, Musson to Musgrave, 20 May 1862; CO 260/96, Hinks to Newcastle, no. 53, 15 November 1861, Musson to Musgrave, 2 November 1861; CO 260/115, Rawson to Kimberly, no. 71, 13

In the same way that Africans were disparaged, Indian indentured labourers attracted a great deal of comment from British officials and planters. However, the stereotypes employed to describe Indians differed from those used against Africans. In all the reports and documents, Indians were universally referred to as 'Coolies', an expression that instantly distanced them from other labourers. As well as being seen as poor workers, they were also accused of being dishonest and complaining. Musson claimed that they were 'addicted to lying and making frivolous and groundless complaints'. James Brown, the Immigration agent in 1870 also claimed that Indians were 'as a class .. deceptive and untruthful'. Brown, in fact, fled the island the following year after embezzling the Immigration funds. Lieutenant-Governor Rennie also stated that 'Coolies, as your Excellency knows, are only too ready to fancy they have a grievance'. All the men making these statements were aware that Indians were being systematically cheated of their promised wages by planters.

The stereotype continued even after it was proved that Indians had been flogged on Argyll estate and then not allowed to leave, and after Cropper revealed the real horrors of their living conditions. European officials continued to side with planters despite conclusive evidence that Indians were not making frivolous complaints. Race and class ideology superseded even international law. Even when under government control, Indians faced abuse. The Witness

September 1871, Immigrant Agent Bennett's Report; The Witness: 15 July 1871; 5 October 1871

condemned the magistrates for subjecting Indians in custody to repeated floggings by young police officers and the constant teasing from a group of local boys. In addition, the newspaper reported that the Indian men were kept in a state of nudity during their incarceration. Laurence has also revealed how managers in Trinidad and British Guiana were able to enforce their labour contracts through the agency of local courts.(35)

Relations with Creoles.

As minority groups, it was important that immigrants were able to adjust and become accepted within the main population in order to contend with the harshness of plantation life. Relations between Africans and creoles appeared to be cordial. Orphaned children were placed with creole families where they were expected to help on provision grounds in exchange for their food. Some Africans also became members of the locally-generated Wilderness sect. This would suggest that creoles welcomed Africans and helped them settle into their new life. Furthermore, there was only a small number of African migrants. Between 1846 and 1867, only 1036 Africans arrived in St. Vincent which would also have led them to assimilate into creole culture.

(35) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 128, 12 May 1863, Musson to Musgrave, 2 May 1863; CO 260/101, Walker to Newcastle, no. 22, 19 April 1864, Musson to Musgrave, 8 April 1864; CO 260/115, no. 91, 13 November, 1871, Rennie to Rawson, 3 October 1871; CO 260/113, Rawson to Kimberly, no. 59, 17 September 1871; CO 260/114, Rawson to Kimberly, no. 3, 3 January 1871; The Witness, 20 July 1865; Laurence, Immigration into the West Indies p. 56.

They also remained on the island. In 1861, there were 907 Africans mainly living in Charlotte and St. George.⁽³⁶⁾

Relations between Madeirans and creoles were also originally harmonious. Creole labourers helped the immigrants to settle into their new homes, taught them how to grow provision crops and gave them clothes and food until they could support themselves. While they were no doubt grateful for this initial assistance, some Portuguese later disassociated themselves from the predominantly black labour force. This gave rise to a degree of resentment and hostility. Charles Day, a traveller in St. Vincent, claimed that the animosity between the two groups was obvious to observers by the late 1840s. In 1858, William Smith described an event which reveals that the animosity between the two groups had strengthened. A Portuguese shop keeper, Emanuel Rodrigues, struck a local pedlar who refused to leave his shop. The pedlar, with the support of other local people, pelted the shop with stones and threatened Rodrigues that people would do to the Portuguese in St. Vincent as they had done in Demerara. This was a reference to attacks made against Portuguese traders in the Angel Gabriel riots in British Guiana when over 600 Portuguese shops were sacked. This animosity was again revealed during the 1862

⁽³⁶⁾ CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1852, Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book; PP, 1873, (12) 1, Immigrants and Liberated Africans Introduced to the West Indian Colonies, 1843-1873, p. 3; CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 54, 12 July 1862, Census returns. For details of the Wilderness church see chapter 8.

disturbances when rioters targeted Portuguese shopkeepers and looted their stores.(37)

Early relations between Indians and creoles were never cordial, and Indian labourers also had to cope with resentment from many Vincentian labourers possibly because Indians were supposed to receive higher wages than local labourers. In the early 1860s, Musson claimed that Indians were unaware of the 'jealousy' that local labourers felt towards them. However, Indians were frightened off the estates during the 1862 disturbances, and some labourers blamed them for the increase in poverty and unemployment among Vincentians. In the 1884 Select Committee for the British Parliament, creole labourers who appealed for assistance from the Colonial Government directly blamed the arrival of Indians for their own increasing distress and lack of work. It is probable that this resentment, coupled with language problems and different religious and cultural practices, made life for many indentured labourers lonely and uncomfortable. Furthermore, few Indian males found creole wives, despite there being a surplus of African-Caribbean women. According to Lieutenant-Governor Rennie, black women did not consider Asians appealing.(38)

(37) St. Vincent Court House Grand Sessions Note Book 1846-1859, 3 November 1846; Charles Day, Five Years Residence in the West Indies (2 Vols. London, 1852) Vol. 1, p. 79; CO 260/91, Hinks to Lytton, no. 53, 3 November 1858, William Smith to Earl of Derby, 23 March 1855, pp. 24-26; Alan Adamson, Sugar without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904 (New Haven, 1972), p. 7. For the 1862 disturbance see Chapter 10.

(38) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 128, 12 May 1863, Musson to Musgrave, 2 May 1863; PP 1884, (3840-1), xlvii p. 119; CO 260/114, Rawson to Kimberly, no. 54, 22 July 1871.

Immigrants as Free Labourers.

Immigration was an attempt to increase the number of dependent labourers within the island. Planters and Colonial Officials hoped that this would ensure that the estates had an abundant supply of labourers. However, the conditions on the estates and the lack of incentives offered to agricultural labourers ensured that many chose alternative lifestyles. After completing their year's indenture, many Africans chose to work with monthly contracts, while others moved off the estates into villages. In 1843, stipendiary magistrates reported that 120 Africans were working on monthly contracts, but the following year magistrates claimed that very few remained on the estates. During the early 1840s, an African-dominated village was established in the interior of the island, where individuals moved when their contracts had expired or when they faced conflicts with plantation managers. Planters and Colonial Officials viewed this independence very unfavourably. However, unlike the other indentured immigrant groups, African labourers tended to remain in St. Vincent.(39)

In 1849, when the first wave of Madeiran migrants had completed their contracts, many started searching for better conditions. Those that wanted to remain on the estates were

(39) CO 260/63, Grey to Stanley, no. 44, 23 October 1843, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Polson's report; CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 53, 18 November 1844, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Polson's report; CO 260/73, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 26, 3 June 1850, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Polson's report; CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1852, Census returns; CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 54, 12 July 1862, Census returns.

sometimes refused further work. Some travelled to other islands or moved to the towns and began trading. Many of the immigrants were from Portuguese towns, and they had migrated to the Caribbean to escape extreme poverty and to improve their economic status rather than to become agricultural labourers. In 1861, only 786 Madeirans (less than half of the original number of immigrants) remained in St. Vincent. Over 100 had moved to Kingstown. Many achieved success by avidly saving their wages and income from their provision grounds to become small-scale traders. In 1851, the Bishop of Barbados described Madeirans as so 'parsimonious' that they would prefer to hoard their money rather than buy adequate food. In the 1851 Blue Book, Campbell also referred to Madeirans as 'the Jews of the colony, spending little or nothing but amassing funds with which to return to their own lands'. Day also described them as 'frugal to abstinence'. Thrift, usually considered a virtue by the British, was applied to the Portuguese as a vice.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Many of the Portuguese immigrants were eventually successful in improving their economic positions in St. Vincent because of their access to credit. Planters saw their enterprises as small scale merchants as useful because it limited the opportunities for local labourers becoming traders. Tax roles and lists of liquor licence traders

(40) CO 260/66, Grey to Gladstone, no. 17, 14 April 1846; CO 260/71, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 37, 11 October 1849, Campbell to Colebrooke, 8 October 1849; Day, Five Years Residence vol 2, p. 109; CO 260/75, Colebrooke to Grey: no. 23, 13 June 1851; no. 26, 20 June 1851; CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 54, 12 July 1862, Census returns.

reveal the steady increase in the fortunes of many Portuguese families after they moved into the towns and villages.(41)

At the expiry of their first period of indenture, Indians could chose either to continue as industrial residents on their estates for a further three, and later five years and then receive free passage back to India, or they could leave their estates and find work on the same terms as local employees. Many from the first shipments chose to leave their estates and move closer to Kingstown. Others applied for passports and moved to Trinidad and British Guiana for higher wages, more access to land and to become part of the larger Indian communities there. In response to this, the Legislature passed an act in 1879 prohibiting ship captains from transporting any Indians from St. Vincent. In fact, many Indians found employment opportunities in St. Vincent scarce and in 1885, 554 free Indians were repatriated because they had been refused work on the estates. In all, over 45 per cent of the 2400 Indians who came to St. Vincent returned home. This was a far higher proportion than in Jamaica, Trinidad or British Guiana, where repatriation figures were 38 per cent for Jamaica and under 30 per cent for Trinidad and British Guiana.(42)

(41) Tax rolls and Liquor Licence holders were listed in the Government Gazettes filed in the CO 264 series in the Public Records Office at Kew.

(42) Thomas, 'The Whites and the Browns', p. 16; Shepherd, Transients to Settlers p. 13.

Conclusion.

Indentured labour was costly, both in terms of money and human suffering. Immigrants were often isolated and given little protection against abuse. While there were no doubt some employers who treated their labourers fairly, the large numbers who attempted to quit the estates, either through abandoning estate labour when their period of indenture expired or by repatriation, indicated the harshness of plantation life. Furthermore, because labour contracts were legally binding and absence from estates was a criminal offence, indentured labourers were unable to expose instances of cruelty or cheating without risking imprisonment.

There can be no doubt that the immigration schemes were also unsuccessful in terms of improving the prospects of the sugar industry. The British ploughmen succumbed to alcohol abuse and lethargy brought on by the climate or quickly removed themselves from field labour. Madeirans quit the fields as soon as their period of indenture was over and survived by hawking and other forms of trading. African labourers suffered a heavy death rate as well as probably being the cause of a severe epidemic of small-pox which killed over a thousand local and African labourers. Many of those who survived, like other ambitious labourers, chose to become freeholders or lease small plots of land. Almost half of the Indian labourers who arrived in St. Vincent returned to India after their indenture had expired or moved to British Guiana and Trinidad. Furthermore, large numbers of Vincentian labourers were also forced, through

unemployment, to leave their homes to find work in British Guiana and Trinidad.(43)

Why then did planters and successive Governors persist with immigration at such a considerable expense and even when there was no longer a labour shortage? The answer to this may be found in a comment made by the immigration agent, Edward Musson. He claimed that planters preferred the inferior labour offered by indentured labourers because of the contracts forced on the Indians and the punishments that could be inflicted on them for non-completion of tasks. Indentured immigrants had to endure appalling conditions and were unable to successfully protest against their managers' employment tactics. While many Africans chose to assimilate into the main population, language difficulties and cultural differences distanced Indians and Madeirans from the African-Caribbean labour force, further weakening their ability to improve their lives.(44)

Another possible reason for the continuation of immigration is that the existence of a poor immigrant workforce enabled planters to reject creole workers, forcing them into increasing poverty. According to Wesleyan missionaries in 1880, on the larger estates near George Town, creole labour had been 'entirely dispensed with and that of Coolies substituted'. 'The swaggering independence' of freed slaves that had so unnerved planters at the

(43) CO 260/99, Walker to to Newcastle, 'no. 111, 2 March 1863, Musgrave to Walker, 5 February 1863; CO 260/116, Rawson to Kimberly, no. 26, 25 April 1872, Rennie's report accompanying the Blue Book.

(44) CO 260/96, Hinks to Newcastle, no. 53, 15 November 1861, Musson to Musgrave, 2 November 1861.

beginning of the 1840s was eroded. In 1880 missionaries wrote that labourers 'suffered exceedingly', and in 1884, labourers themselves claimed that they were 'fast approaching beggary' and 'sorely oppressed'.(45)

(45) PP 1884 (3480-1) xlvi, p. 119; WMMS Synod Minutes, Box 165, St. Vincent Minutes, 1880. The quotation concerning the labourers 'swaggering independence' was taken from CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley, no. 14, Stipendiary Magistrates' reports, Weight's report.

Chapter Six.

Family Life in St. Vincent.

The abolition of slavery enabled people to radically change their family and community organisations. For the first time, many labourers were able to decide where they lived, and how much work each family member undertook. Many were able to determine their children's education and training. Although poverty and class hierarchies continued to restrict family life, many of the first generation of free children experienced opportunities denied to both their parents and later generations. As Teresita Martínez Vergne suggested, the formation and reformation of kinship groups was vital for the ex-slaves' ability to redefine their lives and give 'meaning to freedom' This chapter will examine relationships and family organisations of freed slave labourers in St. Vincent, specifically addressing the question of how family units adjusted to freedom and diversified to face new opportunities and overcome established prejudices. It will also assess the impact of the island's economic decline on the stability of family life among rural workers.(1)

(1) Teresita Martínez Vergne, 'The Liberation of Women in the Caribbean: Research Perspectives for the Study of Gender Relations in the Post-Emancipation period', Caribbean Studies, Vol. 27, 1-2 (1994), p. 6.

Re-building Family Groups.

Slaves were considered chattels in the West Indies, and, as such, they could be sold at the will of the owner or the estate's creditors with no regard to family relations or the feelings of individual slaves. There is some evidence that many slaves actively resisted the transfer of family members to other estates by refusing to work, running away or threatening suicide. Amelioration policies after 1823 discouraged separating slave families, but this was limited primarily to mothers with young children and not other adult relationships. In addition, plantation slaves could not be sold separately if an estate was sold for debts. This was not to protect slaves, but rather to ensure that plantations were not left abandoned. However, the transfer of individual slaves from one property to another was one of the primary hardships described by American slaves in their autobiographies and testimonials. There are few existing slave narratives from the Caribbean, but Mary Prince, a slave who lived in Bermuda, Tortola and Antigua described the day when she was sold away from her mother.

'It recalls the great grief that fills my heart and the woeful thoughts that passed to and fro through my mind whilst listening to the pitiful words of my poor mother weeping for the loss of her children. ... Whilst she was putting on the new osnaburgs in which we were to be sold she said in a sorrowful voice (I shall never

forget it) "See I am shrouding my poor children; what a task for a mother"'.(2)

Mary was badly treated after she was sold and sometimes ran away to her mother for comfort. However, she was later taken to Tortola to work in the salt fields. When she next saw her mother, she had gone insane; the strain of losing her children had become too much to bear.

It is impossible to estimate how many people were sold away from their friends and families within St. Vincent, but advertisements in newspapers testify to the frequency of slave sales. In 1808, in ten weekly newspapers there were thirty-five male and thirty female slaves offered for sale by auction and two women slaves with their young children. There were also three groups with unspecified numbers of slaves for sale. Most of these slaves were sold to pay debts and all but the women with young children could be purchased separately.(3) There were also advertisements for Chancery sales in the newspapers surviving from 1831 which indicate that slaves continued to be sold individually or in mother-child units. During apprenticeship, estate owners continued to attempt to transfer workers from one estate to another. Planters also imposed additional burdens on labourers with children, often forcing parents to send their

(2) See for example, the narratives of slave women from the Americas in William L. Andrews (ed.), Six Women's Slave Narratives (New York, 1988); Narrative of Mary Prince, p. 3.

(3) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and General Advertiser, 16 April 1808 - 9 July 1808.

children to relatives and friends so that they might avoid plantation work and receive some schooling.(4)

After the abandonment of apprenticeship in 1838, many people took the opportunity to seek lost family members and relocate their homes to be with their relatives. Planters claimed that this was another example of the shiftless nature of the black labour force. It was, planters said, an indication of the labourers' love of change and lack of work ethic. In the estate managers' calculations of the declining numbers of people on the estates, they made no reference to families re-uniting and often did not publicise the number of labourers who joined their estates.(5) The stipendiary magistrates noted that many of those moving had gone to join families elsewhere, but the magistrates' observations did not stress the importance of these moves to the people themselves. Even the Wesleyan missionaries referred to early movements of the newly freed people as 'a migratory feeling'.(6)

However, in his autobiography, Samuel Smith gave a compelling account of his great grandmother's efforts to locate one of her daughters. Smith was a labourer from Antigua who lived from 1877 to 1982. He claimed that '[P]eople badly wanted to unite with the family,

(4) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 7, 5 April 1837, Pitman's report, 14 February 1837.

(5) The St. Vincent Chronicle and Public Gazette, 16 April 1839.

(6) CO 260/58, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 2, 31 January 1839, Magistrate reports from Nanton and Crosby; WMS Box 140, File 1838, no. 84, John Lee to General Secretaries, 16 December 1838.

particularly the womankind. I hear that the women was furious and desperate to find their people'. Smith's narrative begins with Rachel, his great grandmother, and two of her daughters, travelling across Antigua in search of Rachel's other daughter immediately after emancipation. Antigua did not adopt the Apprenticeship period, so all slaves were fully freed in 1834. Although her daughter, Minty, had been sold away several years ago and was an adult in 1834, Rachel and her other daughters did not feel that their family unit was complete without Minty. It is a story of heroism and determination which has been passed on to succeeding generations in Smith's family. It was also certainly not unique. James Thome and J. Horace Kimball, two members of the American Anti-Slavery Society who travelled in the Caribbean after emancipation, also noted that most people who left their estates in Antigua went to join family members. They wrote: 'What a resurrection to domestic life that was when long severed families flocked from the four corners of the island to meet their kindred members'.(7)

Marriage and Common-Law Relationships.

In addition to rejoining family members, freed slaves were also able to legitimate their relationships through marriage. In 1834, the Christian churches in St. Vincent

(7) Keithlyn and Fernando Smith (eds.), To Shoot Hard Labour: The Life and Times of Samuel Smith, an Antiquan Working Man, 1877-1982 (Ontario, 1986), pp. 30-32; James Thome and J. Horace Kimball, Emancipation in the West Indies: A Six Month Tour in Antigua, Barbados and Jamaica in the Year 1837 (1838) (rpt. New York, 1969), p. 26.

were Anglican and Wesleyan Methodist. Methodist missionaries were very keen to encourage marriages among freed labourers. They strove to instil in freed labourers their own models of manly and womanly behaviour. Men were to become breadwinners, the heads of households and protectors of their families. Women were expected to assume demure and subservient roles, looking after their husbands and children, creating a haven of peace and harmony for their husbands to return to each night.(8) This image of domestic life was considered very important by British observers in the Caribbean. Marriage became synonymous with civilisation, the antipathy of polygamy, which was seen as heathen and immoral. Freed people were judged by their ability to assume the responsibilities and restrictions that marriage imposed. Until 1841, however, marriages were only legally recognised if they were performed in the Anglican Church. Planters did not want to encourage patriarchal families in St. Vincent as they were aware that this would lead to a decline in the numbers of women workers. The Anglican church also exploited this situation to gain a larger membership, and clergymen discouraged people from marrying in Wesleyan churches by telling them that they were only officially married by Anglican ceremonies.(9)

Marriage ceremonies were expensive and the clothes that couples were expected to wear were costly. Traditionally,

(8) Catherine Hall, 'White Visions, Black Lives: The Free Villages of Jamaica', History Workshop Journal, no. 36 (Autumn 1993), p. 110.

(9) WMMS Box 137, File 1835, no. 96, John Philp to General Secretaries, 8 October 1835.

couples also had to provide lavish meals for their guests, and to invite not only all the labourers on their estates, but also the managers. One Methodist estimated that the total cost of a wedding was eleven pounds and eight shillings sterling when the yearly income of a freed labourer was only just over twenty pounds.(10) Despite the costs, large numbers did marry. On the leeward side of the island, for example, more than half the adult population married during the first ten years after the abolition of slavery. There was a total of 1012 marriages while the estimated total adult population in 1844 in this district was 3442.(11)

There were many reasons why freed labourers chose to marry. Marriage was a requirement for couples who wanted full membership in the Methodist church and the newly established friendly societies. People also married to acquire a better social status. Magistrates indicated that, especially for women, marriage conferred a degree of respectability and honour. The expense of a wedding and the convention that a married woman would not work in the fields also meant that marriage was an indication of wealth and success. Marriage enabled people to distance themselves from their former condition as slaves and women wanted to refute the planters' claims that they were morally inferior. One stipendiary magistrate noted that 'the peasantry of St. Vincent entertain high notions of their own importance, more

(10) WMMS Box 137, File 1835, no. 16, John Rathbone to General Secretaries, 16 July 1835.

(11) CO 260/63, Grey to Stanley, no. 44, 23 October 1843, Polson's report.

especially married couples'. Mindie Lazarus Black's study of law and society in post-emancipation Antigua also suggests that marriage acquired special connotations among freed people as 'a mark of civility, education, financial stability, enduring love, and religious salvation'.(12) In St.Vincent, people also married to ensure that they could live together without fear of eviction, as many planters attempted to force unmarried women living on the estates to continue working. The stipendiary magistrates agreed with the planters that common law wives had no rights to residency on an estate unless they worked. John Colthurst claimed that this was because labourers would ask the magistrates 'one week to sanction the residence of his reputed wife "Sally" and another week for reputed wife "Pratie"'.(13)

Marriage for many freed labourers meant the establishment of the strongly defined gender roles devised by the missionaries. However, although missionaries had encouraged slave men to look forward to having a wife to look after their domestic needs, they strongly criticised men who married 'because they want a servant to cook and wash for them and not from any affection'. This was echoed by one stipendiary magistrate who wrote: 'the husband is

(12) CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley, no. 23, 17 October 1842, Struth's report; CO 260/62, Grey to Stanley, no. 12, 17 April 1843, Struth's report; Mindie Lazarus-Black, Legitimate Acts and Illegal Encounters: Law and Society in Antigua and Barbuda (Washington, 1994), pp. 92-93.

(13) Woodville Marshall (ed.), The Colthurst Journal: Journal of a Special Magistrate in the Islands of Barbados and St. Vincent, July 1835 - September 1838 (New York, 1977), p. 229.

desirous that the time of his wife should be dedicated to his service solely and not to cane cultivation'.(14) These debates on the new roles of wives were carried out primarily by European men. The opinions of the labourers themselves were not transcribed. However, through their actions, labourers revealed that they wanted a more flexible approach to women's work. Women wanted an independent income, and they wanted to be able to care for and feed their children. Therefore, they chose work which would enable them to combine family responsibilities with economic independence. Some remained as part-time estate workers, while others became full-time market gardeners. Others moved to arrowroot estates or into the towns to earn more.(15)

A significant number of the population did not marry. The missionaries and magistrates who remarked on these people tended to view them from a narrow perspective, and common law relationships were considered promiscuous and unstable. This unfortunately means that there are no really reliable descriptions of alternative family groups. Some couples lived together as common law husband and wife, others had visiting relationships, where the partners lived in separate homes, and many labourers included older relations within their family groups.

Between 1864 and 1865, when births were first required to be registered, the Lieutenant-Governor expressed dismay that approximately 65 per cent of black babies were born

(14) WMMS Box 141, File 1843, no. 38, Henry Hurd to General Secretaries, 15 June 1843; CO 260/62, Grey to Lord Stanley, no. 12, 17 April 1843, Polson's report.

(15) For more details on women's work see chapters 3 and 4.

illegitimate. Among white births, 24 per cent were illegitimate and 56 per cent of coloured babies were born to unmarried mothers. Lieutenant-Governor Berkley saw this as proof of the low moral standards of the population.

However, there were other reasons for the high instances of illegitimate births. One reason for this was the disparity in the numbers of men and women. In a population of 31,755, there were about 1750 more women than men. This was in part a result of emigration of male workers to Trinidad and British Guiana in search of better wages and cheaper land. Between 1839 and 1845, 958 people moved to Trinidad from St. Vincent, and the majority of these were males.(16) Another reason why some people chose not to marry may be attributed to the independence of the women. Married women had no right to own property and were expected to obey their husbands. A group of Jamaican women, when asked why they did not marry, replied that they had no wish to substitute one form of slavery for another.(17)

Despite their independence, single women were financially less secure. While there is no evidence that male and female wages were different during this period, by the turn of the century, women were paid significantly less for task and hourly work. Although there were more females than males in the free villages, very few single women became property owners and

(16) The St. Vincent Guardian and Government Gazette, 21 October 1856; CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 54, 12 July 1862, Census returns; Adrian Fraser, 'Development of a Peasantry in St. Vincent 1846-1912' (M.Phil thesis, UWI Cave Hill, 1980), p. 12.

(17) Patrick Bryan, The Jamaican People, 1880-1902 (London, 1991), p. 100.

the early land sales in the free villages were primarily to men.(18)

The stipendiary magistrates voiced concern over the higher proportion of females in the island, claiming that this resulted in sexual immorality. The sexuality of labourers was frequently discussed. Stipendiary magistrates included in their reports anecdotes of the freed labourers' inability to comprehend and fulfil marriage vows. Polson wrote that marriage was a curse rather than a blessing for many couples because of the husbands' infidelity, and this is echoed by the reports of John Weight who claimed that married couples fought 'because of the rumours of the husband having at least one paramour'.(19) Missionaries were more fervent in their condemnation of the lack of conjugal faithfulness among their members. In 1842 the missionary for Calliaqua expelled sixty-five members for 'immorality' although he only had around 210 members that year.(20) Missionaries were obsessed with their followers' morality, partly because of the effects that the perceived sexual activities of the local population had on their own sexuality. Single men found celibacy in the Caribbean a constant trial. Josias Browne, the missionary in George Town pleaded for a wife because he was 'surrounded by men

(18) Adrian Fraser, 'Peasants and Agricultural Labourers in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 1898-1951' (PhD Thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1986), p. 52. For details of female land ownership see chapter 4.

(19) CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley: no. 14, 19 April 1842, Polson's report; no. 23, 17 October 1842, Weight's report.

(20) WMMS Box 140, File 1842, no. 76, Henry Hurd to General Secretaries, 31 December 1842.

living in a state of concubinage having frequently to try at the leaders meetings cases of adultery and fornication and seeing the females walking about almost in a state of nudity'.(21) William English, who was stationed in Chateaubelair in the north west of the island was more affected. He wrote:

'The sin of my constitution, my besetting sin, is immoderate attachment to females. No one can have any conception of the combats between reason and sense, religion and nature of which I have been subject, ... I have at times been ready to do violence to my frame in order to prevent myself from disgracing in a more foul manner my high vocation'.

English was refused permission to marry before the end of his probationary period, and his fiance eventually broke off their engagement. However, six months later, English had transferred to Tobago and had found a wife.(22)

The will power exerted by English and Browne to remain celibate was lacking in Mr. Webster, a missionary who was stationed in Kingstown in 1856. Thomas Butcher, another missionary, reported that Webster was accused of visiting a prostitute called Frances Miller '(or Fanny, as she is called for criminal purposes)' at night. According to Butcher, Webster spent from eight till midnight in the woman's room, and Miller's neighbour gave statements

(21) WMMS Box 140, File 1840, no. 34, Josias Browne to General Secretaries, 21 December 1840.

(22) WMMS: Box 140, File 1842, nos. 52-53, William English to General Secretaries, 10 August 1842; Box 141, File 1843, no. 35, English to General Secretaries, 13 July 1843; File 1843, no. 55, English to Moister, October 11 1843.

concerning the noises that she heard during the visit.

Butcher wrote:

'The details are coarse and disgusting. The woman is old, ugly and filthy - she had been abandoned but since the cholera has been a member and was thought by many to be reformed'.⁽²³⁾

Butcher's statement reveals that Webster was doubly condemned for visiting a prostitute and for selecting a partner who was considered neither young nor desirable. Such comments reveal more about the lives and anxieties of missionaries and magistrates than they do about creoles. Despite the high level of frustration among single men, missionaries continued to believe that their own attitudes to sexuality were superior and they attempted to impose their anxieties onto the African-Caribbean population.

One striking difference between the descriptions of the sexuality of freed labourers and slaves is the attitude to women. Slave women were frequently described as temptresses who lured young white men into sexual relations, but this stereotype is missing from many of the descriptions of freed women labourers. While Europeans stressed their disapproval of common-law relationships and the large percentage of illegitimate births, women were no longer described as sexual sirens. This may have been due to the greater protection that freed women had from the sexual advances of white men. Slave women were easy targets for rape, but free women could not legally be threatened with the lash if they

⁽²³⁾ WMMS, Box 143, File 1856, no. 61, Butcher to General Secretaries, 11 October 1856.

refused sex. Concubinage, however, continued although it was far less open and accepted by white society. The openly sexual nature of European men's domestic lives during slavery was replaced by more furtive liaisons.(24)

As well as commenting on the sexual nature of labourers' relationships, European observers also claimed that violence was prevalent. Domestic violence was described as part of many labourers' lives, and a large number of the assaults listed in the St. Vincent police courts involved family disputes. Studies of domestic violence have suggested who those that are abusive within their own families were often exposed to violence as children. Family violence has also been linked to society violence, and communities decide what level of abuse can be tolerated. It is therefore not surprising that family life in the post-emancipation Caribbean contained a high level of physical punishment. Slavery had been maintained through brutal forms of punishment, and, even after emancipation, control over labour was often exerted by threats of flogging.(25)

(24) Sheena Boa, 'Free Black and Coloured Women in a White Man's Slave Society, Jamaica 1760-1834' (M.Phil thesis, University of the West Indies, 1985), pp. 58-59; Charles Day, Five Years Residence in the West Indies (2 Vols. London, 1852), Vol. 1, pp. 12, 21; Susan Lowes, '"They Couldn't Mash Ants": The Decline of the White and Non-White Elites in Antigua, 1834-1900', in Karen Fog Olwig (ed.), Small Islands Large Questions: Society, Culture and Resistance in the Post-Emancipation Caribbean (London, 1995), p. 42.

(25) Letitia Allen, 'Child Abuse: A Critical Review of the Research and Theory', in J.P. Martin (ed.), Violence in the Family (Chichester, 1978), pp. 51, 64.

Violence against women within labourers' families was often trivialised when described by travellers, missionaries and magistrates. One magistrate described assaults on women as 'a good beating'. Of course, it was not only female labourers who suffered abuse. The Witness claimed that the Chief Auditor, Edward Musson, was described by the Lieutenant-Governor as 'a vulgar dog' who 'wallops his wife'. However, violence against middle-class women remained for the most part hidden. Middle-class observers in Victorian Britain also frequently described the lives of the working class as brutal and violent. The common law in England permitted a man to punish his wife to control her, and it was not until 1891 that this was finally abolished in the courts. The middle classes considered wife beating among the working class as more common than violence in middle-class homes. This was because the proximity of homes in poor areas exposed instances of family cruelty to the public, while abuse within the homes of the middle and upper classes was often unheard and concealed. One Victorian observer claimed that working class wife beaters were common place while a middle-class man who beat his wife was insupportable.(26)

Missionaries were more aware of the damage that violence could do to a family. Henry Hurd saw violence as

(26) CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley, no. 23, 17 August 1842, Struth's report; The Witness 29 June 1865; Michael Freeman, 'The Phenomenon of Marital Violence and the Legal and Social Responses in England', in John Eekelaar (ed.), Family Violence: An International and Interdisciplinary Study (Toronto, 1978), pp. 78-79; Margaret May, 'Violence in the Family, a Historical Perspective', in J.P. Martin (ed.), Violence in the Family p. 139.

another example of 'Satan's work and an aberration of man's real role within the family. He wrote: 'He who should be the protector of his wife curses, insults and beats her and drives her with her helpless babies to seek a more comfortable and secure asylum among strangers'. However, missionaries considered infidelity a far more serious offence than violence against a wife. Men who were charged with having sexual relations outside of marriage were expelled from the Methodist church, while those who beat their wives were only cautioned.(27)

Some magistrates also used cases of domestic violence to illustrate their perceptions of their own superiority. Some claimed that violence was an indication of the fiery temperament of African-Caribbean couples, the labourers' abuse of alcohol and the husbands' infidelity. However, Stipendiary Magistrate John Anderson also incorporated racial stereotypes into his descriptions of violence within African-Caribbean families. In his diary he wrote:

'the wretches in these paroxysm of rage rent their ire alike on their innocent offspring and on themselves. I have seen children's ears bitten through by their infuriated parents when either punishing them or fighting with each other and women without arms - these having been obliged to be amputated to prevent mortification from their husbands' teeth. Even brothers and sisters are equally cruel to each other.

In fact, neither Negro nor coloured people can

(27) WMMS Box 141, File 1843, no. 38, Henry Hurd to General Secretaries, 15 June 1843; Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey, The West Indies in 1837 (1838) (rpt. London, 1968), p. 34.

restrain themselves when once they give way to passion. It is the violence of the demon worked up into human form'.(28)

These descriptions of labourers' families were composed by white observers rather than the labourers themselves and should be viewed with some scepticism. It is likely that many of the authors chose to represent labourers as violent and promiscuous to mitigate their own failings. Anderson, for example, was questioned by the Colonial Office about his overzealous use of flogging as a punishment for minor misdemeanours among the labouring population.(29) On the whole, the freed population kept their family lives hidden from the curiosity of observers. Anderson complained that he was not admitted into the homes of many labourers.(30)

Occasionally, domestic violence resulted in murder, and gender played a large part in determining the punishment of the murderer. For example, Christmas Lewis beat his wife and threw her out of a window because she had given away some rum to an ill neighbour. She died from her injuries. He was sentenced to hard labour and even managed to escape from custody when working on the roads.(31) In comparison, a Madeiran immigrant, Maria de Jesus, was accused of committing 'a crime of the most revolting nature' which was 'scarcely exceeded in the annals of crime' because she

(28) University of Aberdeen, Manuscript, John Anderson's Journal (1836-1839), p. 63.

(29) CO 260/55, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 65, 30 March 1838.

(30) Anderson's Journal p. 23.

(31) The St. Vincent Guardian and Government Gazette, 11 February 1865.

arranged to murder her husband after he violently beat her. Maria de Jesus and an African man called John Deboe were hanged, although the evidence against Deboe was based only on the contradictory and muddled confession which the jail turnkey claimed that the African made. This reported confession, made without witnesses by a man who spoke little English, was denied by Deboe but was deemed by the court to be sufficient to convict and hang him. The authorities punished Maria to ensure that other women did not follow her example. She had a younger Portuguese lover, who was pardoned for his part in the murder, and this increased her guilt in the eyes of the male authorities. They described the young man as being led astray by Maria's 'lustful desires and wicked designs'.⁽³²⁾

Childhood.

Families were respectful to their elders. Richard Burton has suggested that slaves 're-humanised' themselves with the use of family terms such as aunt and granny and that the central importance of the family after emancipation can be revealed in the respectful terms employed by labourers towards their elders. Family honour was important and people were sensitive to any insults especially towards their parents. John Anderson joked that:

'very little gives rise to a curse, above all any allusion to one's mother. Almost anything may be said of the Father, or supposed male progenitor, but of the mother - there is the rub! And this insensitivity to

(32) CO 260/82, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 3, 8 January 1855.

the Father's character, I have heard explained by a planter on the ratio that as he probably had no exclusive right to the title the less he was spoken of the better'.

This remark, which is a typical example of Anderson's humour, is balanced by the comment made by Edward Polson, another magistrate. He claimed that within a quarrel 'the most serious and cutting remarks are applied to the father and mother of their antagonist', showing the loyalty and pride that labourers had for both parents.(33) In addition, slaves usually only had one name, but increasingly during the thirty years after abolition, people acquired surnames. There are no surviving comments in reports of St. Vincent how surnames were selected, although it would appear that many people chose or were given their fathers' name as their surname. Land deeds reveal the frequency of family groups with surnames such as Cudgeo, Cuffee, Cupid and Joseph.

Strict discipline was also part of parenting and mothers in particular were accused of being excessively cruel to their children. William Sewell, an American who travelled in the Caribbean at the end of the 1850s, wrote:

'I have seen parents beat their children in such an inhumane manner as to make me feel that liberty to them was a curse to all over whom they were allowed to exercise any authority'.(34)

(33) Richard Burton, Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition and Play in the Caribbean (Ithaca, 1997), pp. 44, 95; Anderson's Journal, p. 56; CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 29, 6 June 1844, Polson's report.

(34) William Sewell, The Ordeal of Free Labour in the British West Indies (London, 1862), p. 41.

Charles Day, an Englishman who travelled through St. Vincent approximately ten years earlier, also claimed that Caribbean mothers beat their children 'mercilessly on the most trifle occasion' (35).

However, corporal punishment was seen as the best means of correcting and controlling children and was accepted as such by both parents and the wider community. This was not unique to the Caribbean. In Britain also, children were frequently subjected to corporal punishment. During the 1840s there were reports that apprentice children were frequently whipped. Factory children were also sometimes beaten if they failed their allotted tasks. At home, too, some children faced violence. Again, accusations of cruelty towards children were, in Britain and the Caribbean, levelled against the working class by middle-class observers. Therefore, the class and race bias of the observers may have influenced their descriptions. It is possible that the savagery that the poor were accused of using was a reflection of middle-class attitudes towards lower class life. Corporal punishment was also resorted to in private schools and within middle-class families. (36)

Corporal punishment was also considered appropriate for disciplining children who infringed the law. The amelioration policies which were proposed during the later years of slavery and adopted by Trinidad and British Guiana, allowed the corporal punishment of slaves under twelve

(35) Day, Five Years Residence Vol. 2, p. 113.

(36) Eric Hopkins, Childhood Transformed: Working Class Children in Nineteenth Century England (Manchester, 1994), pp. 28, 116-117.

without the intervention of a magistrate. In 1854, Lieutenant-Governor McDowell argued for the introduction of flogging to punish boys who broke the law. The Legislature wanted to introduce this in their Petty Crimes Act to keep boys out of the adult prison and to discourage them from reoffending. Flogging remained a common punishment for young male offenders throughout the period studied, often used even for very trivial minor offences. For example, in 1878, seven boys between the ages of ten and fourteen were flogged. Two were flogged for throwing stones, two for throwing night soil, two were convicted of theft and one was accused of threatening behaviour.⁽³⁷⁾

Perhaps the greatest change for families after the abolition of slavery was the new control that parents were able to have over their children's employment. One of the conditions of the apprenticeship period was that children under six years were totally free. These children were referred to as free children by their parents. This term appears to have offended planters and stipendiary magistrates because it stressed the pride that parents had in their free offspring. During slavery, children were watched over in nurseries while their mothers worked in the fields. When apprenticeship was introduced, many planters disbanded these nurseries, and women with young children were forced to take their children into the fields with them or leave them at home alone. Parents also had to provide food and clothing for their infants and pay for medical

(37) CO 260/81, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 66, 28 September 1854, Colebrooke to McDowell, 17 January 1854; CO 321/23, Strahan to Hicks Beach, no. 46, 6 August 1878.

attendance if they fell ill. The lives for apprenticed mothers were especially hard as they were no longer given time off to breast feed or care for a sick child. This was part of the planters' deliberate policy to force the mothers of young children to apprentice their children to the estates so the planters had total control over the children's labour until they were twenty one. These attempts failed, and only three children in St. Vincent and the Grenadines were apprenticed. These three children all came from families where both parents were either absent or incapacitated.(38)

Parents continued to keep their free children away from estate work after 1838, and many released their older children from field work as well. Some families even faced eviction to free their children from estate work. Children made up a large proportion of those that withdrew from the labour force. Many labourers wanted their children to improve their social position and did not wish them to remain as estate labourers. Immediately after emancipation, stipendiary magistrates and planters expressed their dissatisfaction that large numbers of children were not at work. Planters even wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor to remonstrate that 'the rising generation' were not at work. The Governor replied that 'a more mature knowledge' would teach the freed labourers 'the obligations of all to work for their daily bread'.(39)

(38) PP, 1836 (560) xvi, p. 62; CO 260/56, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 58, 10 March 1838. For details of child care during the apprenticeship, see chapter 2.

(39) CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley, no. 14 19 April 1842, Polson's report; CO 260/59, MacGregor to Russell, no. 1, 10

The Colonial Office also remained concerned that the free children were not working, and stipendiary magistrates were required to note in each report how many children started work. The middle classes in England held a strong belief that the poor should be made to work as much as possible for the benefit of their morals, and, in England, during this period, it was common for the children of working-class families to begin work at the age of around six years.⁽⁴⁰⁾

The concern felt by the Colonial Office about the employment of children was reflected in the questions asked of stipendiary magistrates during the first years of freedom. In each return they were expected to count the number of the children freed in 1834 who were at work. The figures that they gave were probably not complete, but they do reveal the very small number of children that worked on the estates. Polson complained that only one fifth of the children were 'allowed to work'. He stated that in March 1844, out of the 469 children freed in 1834 in the Kingstown district, 102 had started work. Stipendiary Magistrate Sutherland also complained of the ability of some families to have three or four members living off the wages and provision grounds of one worker. Other families exploited the higher wages of strangers by sending their children or partner to work on neighbouring estates. In the windward

February 1840; CO 260/57, no. 227, 23 August 1838, Nanton's report; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 4 January 1840.

(40) E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London, 1968), p. 367; Hopkins, Childhood Transformed pp. 12-16, 178.

district, on the fourteen estates that filled in their returns, only twenty-two children were working. These new workers were reported to be mainly boys who were engaged as mule hands and stock keepers. Children were not idle, however. In the leeward district in 1843, there were 705 children under sixteen: 100 were working, and 309 were at school. Other children were probably at work on their parents' provision grounds or too young to do any work.(41)

However, in later years, this was no longer the case, and children were forced to work on the estates to increase the family income. Furthermore, planters paid children far less than adults and therefore often employed children before adults. Samuel Smith claimed that among the poor in Antigua, parents would send their children to work as soon as they looked old enough and that children were often the main breadwinners within a family.(42) It is also noticeable that attitudes to child labour changed radically during the nineteenth century. While during the 1830s and 1840s, working-class parents were criticised for not making their children work, by the late 1860s, when the British government became interested in the issue of universal compulsory education, parents were described as irresponsible for sending their children onto the estates to

(41) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 4 January 1840; CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, no. 25, 28 September 1839, Sutherland's report; CO 260/59, MacGregor to Russell, no. 1, 10 February 1840, Polson's report; CO 260/62, Grey to Stanley, no. 12, 17 April 1843, Polson's report; CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 29, June 6 1844, Struth's and Dakins' reports; CO 260/63, Grey to Stanley, no. 44, 23 October 1843, Polson's report.

(42) Smith, To Shoot Hard Labour p. 38.

work. Lieutenant-Governor Berkeley claimed that 'the main cause of the want of progress' among the labourers of St. Vincent was that they sent their children to the fields as soon as they were old enough to start work.(43)

Child care was not easy for many working women. Working mothers often had to leave children unattended at home. Coroners' reports frequently gave details of tragic accidents that befell some of these children. Many drowned while bathing alone or with siblings in rivers and dams while others were burned by falling in kitchen fires. During one inquest on such cases the Grand Jury blamed the parents 'whose duty it was to use more caution in their domestic arrangements' and stated that if parents could not find or afford to pay for an elderly person to care for their children, they should take them into the fields. However, planters continued to demand that women work in the fields and few retained nurseries.(44)

Poverty also eroded some family ties. Because of the problems that mothers, and single mothers in particular, had with child care, children were occasionally abandoned by their parents. For example, a report in a local newspaper mentioned that a white baby was left tied to the door of a ploughman's house. This baby was christened Romulous Montrose to ensure that he carried the stigma of his birth throughout his life. In another case, a boy described as a

(43) CO 260/107, Walker to Buckingham, no. 479, 29 August 1867, Berkeley's report accompanying the Blue Book.

(44) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 18 September 1842; 8 May 1847; 5 February 1848; 6 May 1848; 5 May 1849; 8 February 1851.

'street Arab' was arrested by the police for vagrancy. He actually died while in custody because the police refused to take seriously his complaints of feeling extreme pain after a fall. His mother claimed that she had abandoned the boy, who was about thirteen years old, because she could no longer control him. It is likely that these stories were not unique. The island's vagrancy law specifically detailed the offences of child abandonment by either fathers if the child was legitimate, or mothers if illegitimate.⁽⁴⁵⁾

However, despite the recommendations of stipendiary magistrates, no Bastardy laws were passed until 1879 and men were able to leave common-law families to fend for themselves. This was also the case in Trinidad, and David Trotman has suggested it was because the members of the local Legislature did not ^ochose to expose themselves and their friends to claims of parenthood made by their mistresses or after casual sexual contacts.⁽⁴⁶⁾

The migration of many males also helped to weaken family bonds. In the early years after emancipation, many Vincentians moved to Trinidad and to British Guiana. In later years, young men also moved to Santa Cruz, St. Thomas and Grenada in search of work and higher wages. This was particularly noticeable in the Grenadines, where Lieutenant-Governor Gore claimed that the 'major part of the male

(45) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 3 October 1847; 10 October 1847; 24 October 1847; CO 321/63, Robinson to Derby, no. 11, 15 February 1883; CO 321/64, Robinson to Derby, no. 55, 9 June 1883.

(46) David Trotman, Crime in Trinidad: Conflict and Control in a Plantation Society, 1838-1900 (Knoxville, 1986), p. 242.

population' worked for part of the year in Trinidad or Grenada. In fact, in 1881, there were only forty males between the ages of ten and sixty living in Ashton on Union island and only thirty-six living on Canouan. The majority of the islands' inhabitants were women, their children and elderly relatives.(47)

Dunn has described Jamaican sugar plantations during slavery as 'lethal disease environments'. This description could also apply to the estates and villages in St. Vincent after abolition. In the 1840s, infant mortality and still births were reported to be lower than during slavery which one clergyman claimed was due to increased sexual morality. More realistically, Stipendiary Magistrate Edward Polson pointed out that a lower work load for women was a more probable cause. However, increasing poverty also led to a rise in infant death rates. For example, between 1864 and 1865, the figures for infant mortality and still births were comparable to some estimates for the 1820s in Jamaica. There were 208 infant deaths and forty three still births to 1456 births. This high rate was due to the prevalence of many infectious diseases and undernourishment.(48)

(47) Philip Nanton, 'The Transfer of Power in a Small Caribbean Country: The Role of the State in St. Vincent and the Grenadines' (Phd Thesis, University of Sussex, 1986), pp. 226-227.

(48) Richard Dunn, 'Sugar Production and Slave Women in Jamaica', in Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (eds.), Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas (Virginia, 1993), p. 72; CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 53, 18 November 1844; CO 260/104, Walker to Carnarvon, no. 401, 11 August 1866, Berkeley's report accompanying the Blue Book; Barry Higman, Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica 1807-1834 (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 47-48.

Many infants died from unknown causes and when a baby died, the mother was often suspected of infanticide. One reason for this was that, because it was expensive to arrange a burial, mothers would often dispose of their infant's corpse in make-shift graves or pits. Also, the body of a dead baby may not have been considered as sacrosanct by labourers. In one case, a mother pleaded with a curate of the Anglican church to bury her baby. He refused and the next day found a mutilated baby's body in an open grave. The body had been beaten and a finger removed. The mother was suspected of killing her baby, but a coroner revealed that the mutilations had taken place after death. According to the coroner, there was a belief among labourers that if a mother mutilated the corpse of her dead baby, her next child would survive and be healthy. Several women were convicted of infanticide, including Mary James, who was executed in 1866.(49)

Diseases accounted for many infant deaths. St. Vincent had serious cholera and small pox epidemics during the nineteenth century which resulted in the deaths of many children and adults. In 1882, an investigation into conditions within the rural areas in St. Vincent revealed that yaws had also reached epidemic proportions. Many doctors blamed the incidence of the disease for the failure of immunization programmes against small pox, as parents

(49) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser; 30 October 1841; 6 May 1848; 11 August 1849; 22 February 1851; 7 August 1852; 6 November 1852; The St. Vincent Guardian and Government Gazette, 22 October 1864; CO 260/105, Walker to Carnarvon, no. 431, 7 December 1866. Details of Mary James' execution can be found in chapter 8.

were anxious to ensure that their children did not contract yaws from contaminated blood plasma. Yaws, which is a form of syphilis, is highly contagious. Symptoms include pain in the joints, raspberry shaped skin lesions, tubboes, cracked feet and ulcers. The report of 1882 exposed the misery of many village and estate inhabitants. Lack of medical facilities and information resulted in the rapid spread of the disease. In South Rivers, for example, 100 of the 270 residents were infected, and little was done to stop the spread of the disease. Mothers were even described as passing yaws onto their babies through breast feeding. Despite the large numbers infected, including forty Indian immigrants, notes made by the Colonial Office within the dispatch, reveal that officials were indifferent to the plight of those exposed to the disease.(50)

Education.

In the early years after emancipation labourers frequently demanded schools. They were willing to pay the school fees from their small wages and forgo the additional income that their children could earn. One missionary noted that the establishment of a school near an estate could also induce labourers to move there. Education was seen as a means of negating the effects of slavery, and adults also enrolled in Sunday and evening schools. Thome and Kimball noted that many parents stressed their desire to see their children educated. Labourers described education as a

(50) CO 321/58, Robinson to Kimberley, no. 93, 29 September 1882.

'great blessing'. In 1848 a group of labourers petitioned the Queen to become a patron of their school, as without an education the labourers 'could not fully appreciate their freedom'. The labourers who achieved an education did so with very little help from the local Legislature.

Throughout the period covered in this study, the planter controlled Assembly refused adequate funding for schools while spending large sums on immigration schemes.(51)

Rigid class hierarchies ensured that education was not egalitarian. The ruling authorities expected the poor to remain in their allotted station and remain subservient but industrious workers. Therefore, when the authorities or churches provided schooling for the children of agricultural labourers, it was only of a rudimentary nature. These schools only enabled lower-class children to learn basic literacy skills and Christianity. In fact, during the majority of debates concerning the education of the poor, the authorities stressed the need for agricultural and industrial schools rather than establishments offering more academic skills. The middle classes feared that the education of the poor would lead to laziness.(52)

(51) WMMS Box 141, File 1843, no. 50, William Moister to Elijah Hoole, 26 July 1843; Thome and Kimball, Emancipation in the West Indies p. 18; CO 260/68, Reid to Grey, no. 29, 25 August 1848, Petition from the Natives and Residents of the Island to the Queen, 1 August 1848; Norma Keizer, 'A Short History of Education in St. Vincent in the Nineteenth Century', Flambeau (September 1967), pp. 17-18.

(52) See for example, CO 260/54, Smith to Glenelg, no. 17, 1 June 1836, Report from a Joint Committee of the Legislature regarding Negro Education; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 21 November 1835.

Even the limited goals of the ruling authorities for educating the poor were not fully realised in St. Vincent, primarily because of a lack of willingness to fund government schools. Religious organisations ran the majority of the schools in the island. Until 1845, the British Government funded some of the schools in St. Vincent through the Mico Charity. When the provision of education became the responsibility of the local Legislature, funding decreased. In fact, the majority of the Legislature's funds for education were allotted to the free school, a grammar school for the sons of the middle classes. In 1855, funding for schools was withheld and fourteen government schools closed.⁽⁵³⁾ The apathy of the ruling class to improve the conditions of the poor, which also extended to their reluctance to fund decent medical facilities and roads, was revealed in petitions sent to the Lieutenant-Governors concerning the increase in taxes to fund public amenities. Despite the small tax burden imposed on plantation managers, they resented any increases which did not directly benefit their own class.⁽⁵⁴⁾

However, despite the costs of education imposed on labourers, many attempted whenever possible to send their children to schools. Figures show that boys were slightly more likely than girls to be educated, but in many schools

(53) Keizer, 'A Short History of Education in St. Vincent', pp. 17-18; Shirley Gordon, A Century of West Indian Education (London, 1963), pp. 39-40.

(54) Petitions from planters complaining about taxes can be found in CO 321/003, Rawson to Kimberley, no. 38, May 6 1874; CO 321/48, Harley to Kimberley, no. 121, 12 December 1879; CO 321/76, Robinson to Derby, no. 65, 29 July 1885.

the numbers of boys and girls were not significantly different. The number of scholars, however, was not equal to the number of children. In 1846, there were reportedly only 1850 children at day school and 1675 at Sunday school, and in 1860, this had increased to 2420 children at day school: 1129 boys and 901 girls. There are no precise figures of the number of children in the population, as census data was both inaccurate and the age bands of under ten years, and ten to twenty years do not indicate how many of these children were of school age. However, the numbers of registered scholars suggests that although a very significant number of parents attempted to elevate their children, the majority of labourers' children were denied the chance of any schooling. In addition, reduced employment opportunities for adults after 1862 forced many children out of school and into the plantations. Missionaries saw this as indicating a declining interest in education; however, it was probably in response to poverty and hunger. High costs and a lack of close and available schools also inhibited universal education.(55)

Migration.

One of the greatest hardships for slaves was the separation of family members. This can be inferred from the determination of freed people to reunite with their loved ones at the termination of the apprenticeship period. However, after the abolition of slavery, different forces

(55) CO 265/3, Stipendiary Magistrates' Returns, Consolidated table, December 1846; CO 265/40, Blue Book 1865; WMMS Synod Minutes, Box 161, St. Vincent Minutes, 1870.

compelled families to separate. During the 1840s, many people moved to Trinidad and British Guiana to earn higher wages and to be able to eventually afford their own land. While there are no figures which accurately reveal the extent of this migration, there were at least 958 Vincentians who transferred to Trinidad between 1839 and 1845, and stipendiary magistrates indicated that these were mainly men. Certainly, the planters were alarmed at this migration and attempted to curtail it. In 1839, they enacted an Emigration Act, aimed at stemming a potential flow of workers to other islands by obliging the migrants to prove that they had no living relatives who might require assistance from them. Although the act was disallowed by the Colonial Office, it reveals the planters' fears of a mass movement of workers in search of better conditions and pay.⁽⁵⁶⁾

It was during the 1860s and 1870s that migration became more common, and during this period, people migrated out of necessity rather than choice. The continuing decline of the sugar industry, the availability of indentured labourers and the collapse of arrowroot prices changed the nature of migration from a determination to improve socially and economically to a desperate struggle to survive. Migrants in the early 1870s were, according to Wesleyan missionaries, fleeing starvation. Many young men migrated so they could send money back to their families and relieve their families

(56) CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, no. 9, 6 April 1839; Adrian Fraser, 'Development of a Peasantry in St. Vincent, 1840-1912' (M. Phil thesis, University of the West Indies, 1980), p. 12.

from the burden of feeding them. There are no available figures to assess the numbers that left. However, according to the census of 1881, there were over 800 more women than men aged between twenty and thirty. As many indentured labourers were young men of this age, the gap between male and female creoles may have been greater. The Wesleyan missionary from the Kingstown district reported losing fifty-eight young male church members in 1874, an unspecified number the following year and a further fifty in 1876. From the small town of Layou, twenty young male Methodists migrated in 1878. These men would have made up a small proportion of the total numbers that left. There is no way of estimating how many of these migrants returned home, or indeed how many sent money back to their families. Their absence increased the number of female-headed households and was no doubt partly responsible for the rise in child employment.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Conclusion.

There was a large disparity between the behaviour of labourers and the expectations of planters and magistrates. Missionaries had encouraged former slaves to build stable family groups with the wife at home, the children at school and the husband at work. While some freed slaves aspired to this model, a large number of women rejected the subservient position it offered them and chose economic independence.

(57) CO 321/48, Robinson to Kimberly, no. 83, 8 September 1881, Census Returns; WMMS Synod Minutes: Box 163, St. Vincent Minutes 1874, 1875; Box 164, St. Vincent Minutes, 1876, 1878.

However, planters and many magistrates wanted labourers to develop into families similar to those of the English poor, where all members were required to work on the estates to bring home a family wage, with poverty ensuring that they remained subservient and obsequious to their superiors. Initially labourers struggled against this, but as work became scarcer and wages were reduced or irregularly paid, more women and children took low paid work on the estates.

However, freed labourers exhibited a degree of self pride and independence which the middle classes found unsettling. The initial refusal of many women to work on the estates and the demands for schooling for the children were seen as examples of the labourers 'perverted views'. The children born between August 1828 and 1838 were cushioned by their parents from the harshness of estate work for as long as possible. It was not until 1842 that any of the children started work on the estates, and these were employed to watch the animals.(58) These children experienced a childhood that differed greatly from their parents, their peers in England and later generations in St. Vincent. They were not idle as they worked on their parents' provision grounds and cared for younger siblings as well as attending schools, but they were brought up to feel pride in their status as 'free children'. This upbringing may have contributed to the widespread riots that took place in St. Vincent in 1862 when the free children had reached

(58) CO 260/59, MacGregor to Russell, no. 2, 10 February 1840. Lord Russell refers to the desire for education as perverted in his reply to McDowell's dispatch; CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley, no. 23, 17 October 1842, Polson's report.

adulthood and the rights and privileges that their parents had struggled for were being eroded.(59)

However, despite the early achievements of freed slaves to improve their children's lives, poverty weakened family stability. Disease, migration, child labour and the abandonment of children were all symptoms of the declining living standards among the rural poor. Many of the children of the 'free children' experienced hardship and hunger and lived in appalling housing within unstable family units. In 1897, Wesleyan minister James Darrell described the living conditions of many Vincentian families as 'crushing poverty'. He blamed this on the migration of many men, the lack of employment opportunities and the refusal of planters to sell or rent affordable small plots of land to rural workers.(60)

(59) For details of the 1862 riots see chapter 10 and Woodville Marshall, 'Vox Populi the St. Vincent Riots and Disturbances of 1862', in Barry Higman (ed.), Trade, Government and Society in Caribbean History (Kingston, 1983), pp. 84-115.

(60) PP 1898, (39), li (1), (c. 8669), Report of the Royal Commission 1897, p. 95.

Chapter Seven.

Religious Influences in St. Vincent.

In a society as divided as St. Vincent was during the post-emancipation period, it is not surprising that religious beliefs and affiliations often strengthened class and race barriers. Membership of religious organisations usually reflected social and economic positions and aspirations of the population. There were also conflicts and rivalries between various religious groups which mirrored problems within the wider society. This chapter will examine the two main Christian Churches in post-emancipation St. Vincent, the Wesleyan Methodists and Anglicans. There were also locally-generated religious groups, which incorporated the use of trances and spirit possession. I. M. Lewis has suggested that in many societies ecstatic religious expressions have been utilised by dispossessed groups, and especially women, as a means of protesting against social constraints. This chapter will assess the roles of African-Caribbean generated religious groups and the emergence of the 'Shakers', a sect which originated in St. Vincent. There were also small Roman Catholic and Scottish Presbyterian congregations, but their influence was minimal on the wider African-Caribbean population, so they will be given less attention here. In addition, there is a lack of primary sources concerning the religious practices of indentured Indians in St. Vincent;

therefore, I will not attempt to address this aspect of religious life.(1)

The Anglican Church.

The Anglican Church originally served English and, to a lesser extent, other British residents. During slavery, very little was done by the Anglican Church to involve slaves. There were some mass baptisms of slaves at the request of planters, but these were carried out with little or no instructions about Christianity and the slaves that were baptised were not encouraged to attend services. Between 1798 and 1817, a total of 14,603 slaves were baptised in St. Vincent. The lack of religious instruction offered to slaves was a result of both the planters' reluctance to educate slaves and improve their moral state and a general apathy towards religion. According to Mrs. Carmichael, local white residents were not particularly interested in the work of the Church or in Christianity in general.(2)

(1) I. M. Lewis, Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 32; Mimi Sheller, 'Democracy after Slavery: Black Publics and Peasant Rebellion in Jamaica and Haiti' (PhD thesis, New School for Social Research, 1996), p. 272. For details of Indian religious activities in Jamaica, see Verene Shepherd, Transients to Settlers: The Experience of Indians in Jamaica 1845-1950 (Leeds, 1994), pp. 204-225.

(2) Bernard Marshall, 'Society and Economy in the British Windward Islands, 1763-1823' (PhD Thesis, University of the West Indies, 1972), p. 423; A. C. Carmichael, Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured and Negro Populations of the West Indies (1833) (rpt. 2 Vols. New York, 1969), vol. 1 p. 48-49.

However, after the abolition of slavery, there was a concerted effort on the part of the Anglican Church to gain converts among the freed slave population. The conversion of freed slaves to Anglicanism was initially rapid. In 1838, for example, there were 700 regular attendants at the Kingstown Church and seventy communicants. By 1843, the number of attendants had almost doubled to 1300, with 260 communicants. In 1841, the total number of Anglicans in St. Vincent was estimated at 7000. A new Church was also opened in George Town, and by 1843, it had 1500 attendants and 156 communicants. According to the 1861 census, there were 13,652 members of the Church of England island-wide.(3)

Two reasons may be advanced for the Anglican Church choosing to encourage membership from the newly-freed slaves. Firstly, the free population possessed a significant share of the island's income. It was estimated that free labourers earned about \$100 per year. The rural labouring population alone, therefore, controlled an annual income of over \$700,000.(4) Secondly, free people could choose where they lived, and there was a fear that they would decide to move away from any European influence. Therefore, Anglicans wanted to instil primarily British

(3) CO 260/60 MacGregor to Russell, 3 February 1841, no. 2, Returns of the Congregations of each Denomination of Christians; CO 260/63 Grey to Stanley, no. 44, 23 October 1843, Stipendiary Magistrate Nathaniel Struth's report; WMMS Box 229, File 1862, no. 49, Census returns 14 October 1861.

(4) CO 260/61, Grey to Stanley, no. 14, 19 April 1842, Stipendiary Magistrate Weight's report.

ethics into the African-Caribbean population to ensure that the island remained dominated by British culture.

The Anglican Church was supported by government funds and donations. It did not charge its congregations pew money, but people were expected to donate to the collection each week and had to pay fees for religious ceremonies such as baptism, marriage and funeral services. Therefore, Anglican ministers encouraged labourers to join their congregations as a means of improving Church funds. One minister clearly expressed this when he wrote to a local newspaper: 'It is incumbent on Ministers to extort their people to liberal charity, and to direct them to the best ways of collecting and applying their contributions.'⁽⁵⁾

Social control of the freed population was also very important to some Anglican ministers. The ministers were conservative men, anxious to retain and enforce systems of race, class and gender hierarchies. Among their most vociferous campaigners was Reverend Thomas Browne. He was a planter, and the grandson of General Thomas Browne, who had fought for the British in the American War of Independence and against the Caribs and received much of the Caribs' land as a reward. Reverend Browne was also a strong opponent of abolition. In 1835, he wrote an open letter to Reverend Cherkley, dean of St. Vincent, putting forward his opposition to apprenticeship and his vision of how a free society should be organised. His views on apprenticeship were typical of many planters, namely that it gave

⁽⁵⁾ The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 24 February 1855.

apprentices too much in the way of allowances and deprived planters of the ability to extract adequate labour from their workers. He also complained that children under six years had been freed.

In his opposition to free children, Browne reveals much of his own views on how the free society should be run. He was anxious that schooling for free children should be organised so that only the children of those at work on estates should be allowed to attend schools. He also wanted schools to be open for only two days each week so children would have to work on estates during the other four days. Finally, he wanted the content of lessons to reflect his own perception of class and race. He wrote: 'In all charity schools for the lower orders ... the children should be gratuitously instructed only so far as it is consistent with their future prospects in life'.⁽⁶⁾

Members of the Anglican clergy who wanted to restrict the access of labourers to education and advancement beyond the needs of a field worker also wanted to restructure gender roles. In England and in the Caribbean, women were peripheral figures in the running of the Church, with limited power and responsibilities. They were considered useful primarily for organizing bazaars, producing handicrafts and teaching girls. The wider roles of women in Caribbean society was viewed with some dismay by Anglican leaders. For example, after his visit to St. Vincent in 1852, the Bishop of Barbados spoke out against the large

⁽⁶⁾ The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 21 November 1835.

number of illegitimate births, which he blamed on working women. Illegitimacy, he wrote:

'would be checked by keeping the women, the young women especially, more at home ... provided they have occupations enough to keep them fully employed, which I fear is not the case yet. Perhaps the practice, (not quite uncommon in this island) of employing women on the estates apart by themselves, for a portion of the day, and in different work from men would be a step towards improvement.' (7)

Equality between men and women on any level was therefore seen by the Bishop as a threat to society. Ideally, he wanted women kept at home, but was aware that demands for labour would not permit this. However, by segregating women from men and reducing and differing their tasks, society could continue to marginalise women and treat them as physically, intellectually and morally inferior. This debate was also occurring in Britain during this period, when the use of women in agricultural gangs was believed to be responsible for a rise in illegitimate births. (8)

(7) CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 28, 26 July 1852, Extract from a Letter from the Lord Bishop of Barbados to Hamilton, 15 July 1852.

(8) Ivy Pinchbeck, Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution (1930) (rpt. London, 1969), p. 89.

Wesleyan Methodists.

Unlike the Anglican Church, the Methodist mission's initial goal in St. Vincent was to effect the conversion of slaves to Christianity. In January 1787, Dr. Coke first visited the island and was given permission to install a missionary there. He visited St. Vincent twice more, commenting in 1790, that he saw 'a prospect of a great flame throughout the island'. Methodists enjoyed significant success in St. Vincent, and by 1823 had a membership of 15 whites and 2889 slaves, five missionaries and three schools.⁽⁹⁾ Numbers continued to increase and in 1841, they claimed 6000 members and 3000 'hearers'. One missionary wrote enthusiastically that St. Vincent could become the most successful island for Wesleyans. In 1861, the census revealed that there were 14,177 Wesleyan members.⁽¹⁰⁾

The initial success of the Methodists resulted in conflicts between them and the Anglican Church as each group attempted to poach members from the other. For example, before Methodist marriages were legally recognised, missionaries complained that Anglican ministers persuaded Methodists to marry in the Anglican Church. Methodists who married Anglicans were also expected to adopt the Anglican faith, and missionaries claimed that Anglican ministers also

(9) Marshall, 'Society and Economy' pp. 469-70, 480.

(10) CO 260/60, MacGregor to Russell, no. 2, 3 February 1841; WMMS Box 140, File 1839, no. 33, Cullinford to General Secretaries, 9 June 1839.

used the power of their friendly societies to bind new members 'hand and foot' to the Church.(11)

Thomas Browne was especially opposed to Wesleyans, and in 1835, for example, he wrote to the newspapers and the Lieutenant-Governor complaining about the Wesleyans. Browne accused the Wesleyans of teaching their people that if any labourers worked on their free days, they would be whipped as the King had stated that these were days given to the apprentices by God. This was strongly denied by the Wesleyans.(12) Browne also enjoyed tormenting individual missionaries. In 1842, he initiated complaints against Josias Browne, the missionary stationed in George Town. He accused Josias Browne of baptising the unconverted. In 1851, Thomas Browne accused Henry Pinner of permitting Shakers and accused witches to join the Wesleyan Church. Pinner denied this and claimed that he had tried to get along with Browne, but that Browne fanatically hated Wesleyans. A few years later, Browne attacked missionary Henry Pimm, accusing him of baptising illegitimate babies on the day that Browne had reserved for baptising legitimate babies. Pimm responded that he believed that Browne was an

(11) See for example, WMMS Box 136, File 1835, no. 96, Philp to General Secretaries, October 8 1835; Box 140, File 1840, no. 35, Blackwell to General Secretaries, 27 August 1840; Box 142, File 1851: no. 25, Elison to General Secretaries, 10 May 1851; no. 57, Bannister to General Secretaries, 12 September 1851.

(12) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 21 November 1835.

insomniac and needed to quarrel with someone every six weeks.(13)

In the early 1860s, however, Browne was successfully defeated by the Wesleyan missionary John Greathead. In George Town, the Methodist chapel and Anglican Church are situated next to each other. Greathead's style of preaching was so loud that he could actually be heard inside Browne's Church. Browne complained to the Wesleyan leaders in England about Greathead's noise and began a campaign against him, claiming that Greathead was thought of as a mad man in British Guiana, where he had previously been stationed. Browne also forbade his parishioners from even entering the Wesleyan chapel. Greathead responded by displaying Browne's letter of complaint against him in the middle of the town 'as a placard'. Browne was eventually forced to close his Church on Sunday mornings and hold his services in the afternoon to avoid the sound of Greathead's preaching.(14) However, Greathead's actions during the 1862 riots, when he sided with the planters against the labourers, precipitated the decline in support of the Wesleyan mission. In 1865, Reverend Frederickson replaced Browne as minister for George

(13) WMS Box 140, File 1842, no. 65, Bannister to General Secretaries, 10 October 1842; Box 143, File 1852: no. 78, Browne to General Secretaries, 21 September 1852; no. 82, Pinner to General Secretaries, 28 September 1852; Box 228, File 1859: no. 68, Browne to General Secretaries, 24 September 1859; no. 93, Pimm to General Secretaries, 5 December 1859.

(14) WMS Box 229, File 1860: no. 28, Cleaver to General Secretaries, 24 April 1860; no. 33, Greathead to General Secretaries, 18 May 1860; no. 79, Browne to General Secretaries, 24 September 1860; File 1861, no. 41, Browne to General Secretaries, 6 May 1861.

Town. One of his first acts was to offer to re-baptise any Wesleyans who wished to join the Anglican Church. As this came at a time when the Wesleyans' popularity was at its lowest, many people took the opportunity to attend the ceremony.(15)

The conflict between the Anglican and Methodist Churches intensified in the late 1860s because of a review of the funding of religious institutions. After many years of campaigning by the Wesleyans, the Legislature agreed to vote funds to religious bodies according to their membership. This led to allegations by both Churches that their rival was falsifying membership figures, and the Wesleyans accused the Anglicans of continuing to re-baptise Methodists. Both the Bishop of Barbados and the Bishop of British Guiana were involved in the dispute, and the Anglican ministers only agreed to stop the baptisms when requested to do so by the Bishop of Barbados. In fact, the Legislature decided to apportion funding on a more equal basis gradually, so incumbent Anglican ministers would not lose their livings.(16)

Several reasons may be suggested for these petty battles for control over members. Prejudice was one reason. Wesleyan missionaries were primarily sons of small tradesmen and were looked down on by the Anglican Church, with its

(15) WMMS Box 229, File 1865, no. 24, Spratt to General Secretaries, 3 May 1865.

(16) CO 260/107, Walker to Buckingham, no. 496, 23 November 1867; CO 260/108, Walker to Buckingham: no. 525, 28 March 1868; no. 539, 16 May 1868,; CO 260/114, Rawson to Kimberley: no. 22, 8 March 1871; no. 57, 1 August 1871.

wealthy, upper class priests and their love of ceremony. Governor Rawson claimed that, as the Anglicans in St. Vincent were all members of the 'High Church', they were more interested in the numbers of their own congregations, rather than the numbers of people 'walking on the Highway to Heaven'. However, money was also a primary motive. Fund raising was a major part of the missionaries' work. Letters from missionaries to the General Secretaries reveal the large sums of money extracted from members and the efforts made by missionaries to increase their collections. In periods of prosperity they praised members for their generosity. For example, in 1839, one circuit was able to double its subscriptions when a class leader publicly decided to pay double. This action swayed the other members to follow suit and Reverend Cullingford, the missionary for Kingstown and the leader of the St. Vincent mission, wrote that 'if proper exertions be made, their liberality will be well sustained'. It also appeared that Wesleyans had a reputation among local people for their love of money. In 1856, for example, one woman recalled during a court case, that when she wanted to visit a missionary meeting she had to first visit her daughter to get a silver bit 'as the missionaries did not like coppers'.(17)

(17) CO 260/111, Rawson to Granville, no. 683, 15 September 1869; WMMS Box 140, File 1839: no. 61, Bannister to General Secretaries, 14 November 1839; no. 85, Cullingford to General Secretaries, 11 December 1839; File 1840, no. 56, Blackwell to General Secretaries, 3 December 1840; CO 260/85, Hincks to Labouchere, no. 12, 24 March 1856, Minutes from the Court of the Grand Sessions, 21 February 1856, Evidence of Clorinda Martin.

When the island experienced economic depression, Wesleyans complained that members refused to pay their fees. Their missionaries were frustrated that the Anglican Church was supported by government grants raised through taxes. They petitioned the House of Assembly in 1862 to point out that because their members were tax payers, it was unfair that Anglicans received a grant while they did not. Even when the Legislature agreed to apportion funds equally, the Wesleyans were disappointed because of the decision to delay equal funding until the incumbent Anglican clergy retired or died.⁽¹⁸⁾ Wesleyans charged pew money and class fees for enquirers as well as fees for marriages, baptisms and funerals. The money they raised had to pay the wages and expenses of the missionaries and the construction and maintenance costs of the chapels. Missionaries were also under strong pressure to send money to England for the Wesleyan general funds, and, during periods of economic depression, they were frequently castigated if their subscriptions were down. By 1868, the St. Vincent Wesleyans had debts of over L5000.⁽¹⁹⁾

The initial enthusiasm for Methodism began to wane after the mid 1840s, when labourers had less work and less money, but were still expected to pay their subscription

(18) WMMS Box 229, File 1862, no. 54, Petition to the House of Assembly.

(19) WMMS Box 145: File 1854, no. 8, Hurd to General Secretaries, 25 January 1854; File 1855, no. 29, Williams to General Secretaries, 5 April 1855; Box 229, File 1861, no. 6, Barratt to General Secretaries, 18 January 1861; File 1863, no. 117, Barratt to General Secretaries, 8 December 1863; CO 260/108, Mundy to Buckingham, no. 545, 16 June 1868.

fees. Some Wesleyan missionaries were also thought to be unsympathetic to problems faced by labourers. There were also suggestions that some ministers felt an antipathy towards black and mixed race people. For example, when Reverend Clegg requested permission to marry, he stated that he was worried about the reactions of some of his colleagues as his fiance was mixed race. He wrote: 'many of the brethren are more prejudiced than those who profess not to believe that God hath made of one blood one nation'. This prejudice can also be seen in the letters from some missionaries who complained that they could not regularly socialise with other white people. After 1862, many labourers had become disillusioned with the Methodists because the missionaries supported the planters during the riots. In addition, many estates had collapsed and been abandoned. Therefore, Wesleyan missionaries found it increasingly difficult even to pay their own expenses. One missionary described Vincentians as 'not over-burdened with Methodism', and he complained that they could not be persuaded to donate funds.⁽²⁰⁾

Missionaries, like Anglican ministers, wanted to control the behaviour of the black population. Catherine Hall has shown in her work on missionaries in Jamaica that one of the missionaries' primary aims was to enforce English middle-class ethics on Jamaican people. Raymond Smith has

⁽²⁰⁾ WMMS Box 143: File 1852, no.63, Clegg to General Secretaries, 8 September 1852; File 1857, no. 58, Pinner to General Secretaries, 26 June 1857; Box 142, File 1847, no. 6, Binks to General Secretaries, 24 February 1847; File 229, File 1865, no. 55 Shrewsbury to General Secretaries, 7 October 1865;

also stated that 'while Christianity functioned briefly as a vehicle for radical expectations of those in the West Indies who most desired change-the slaves-the missionary effort never transcended its origins in the ideal and material interests of the English bourgeoisie'.(21) This was also true for the missionaries of St. Vincent. The declared intention of the Wesleyans was not to interfere with the civil authorities, and they only preached on estates where they were invited by the planter. However, Methodists were subjected to some hostility from the planter class in St. Vincent. In 1791 their chapel in Kingstown was raided and their bible was hung from the gallows. One of their missionaries was also imprisoned. After this they were left relatively unmolested.(22)

After the abolition of slavery, Wesleyans claimed that their members were the best workers, who rarely came into conflict with managers or magistrates. This echoes similar claims made by Wesleyans in England who boasted that their members did not participate in strikes. Wesleyans rarely supported labourers in their struggles for better working conditions, and when they did, they stressed their overall belief that labourers had duties rather than rights.(23) For

(21) Catherine Hall, 'White Visions Black Lives: The Free Villages of Jamaica', History Workshop Journal, no. 36 (Autumn, 1993), p. 110; Raymond T. Smith, 'Religion in the Formation of West Indian Society: Guyana and Jamaica', in Martin L. Kilson and Robert I. Rotberg (eds.), African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays (Cambridge, 1976), p. 315.

(22) Marshall, 'Society and Economy' pp. 321, 469, 475.

(23) WMMS Box 140, File 1839, Hurd to General Secretaries, 6 April 1839; Reverend W. Moister, The West Indies Enslaved and Free (London, 1883), p. 321.

example, in 1843, Wesleyans protested against the estate manager at North Union because he refused to allow them to build a school on the estate, although the owner had given them permission to hold services there. Five years later missionaries had an altercation with the new manager, Robert Chapman, when he refused to pay workers the money he owed them. In both instances, missionaries were accused of causing friction between the planter and workers. They refuted this strongly, claiming in 1843 that they only wanted to make labourers 'what we ardently wish them to be, viz, a happy and industrious peasantry - a people prepared for their proper station on earth'. In 1848, although they were instrumental in assisting the labourers in their claims for the wages owed them, missionaries claimed responsibility for preventing any violence. One missionary, William Bannister, even stated that he had lent some of his personal money to a sugar estate and had therefore told labourers that they might have to face a reduction in wages or work harder. One minister in England described the Wesleyans' political beliefs when he wrote, 'Methodism ... hates democracy as much as it hates sin'.⁽²⁴⁾

However, individual Wesleyan missionaries were not indifferent to the increasing poverty that many labourers

(24) WMMS Box 141: File 1843, no. 32, Moister to Dr. William Dakins, 18 May 1843; File 1844, no. 6, Moister to Rev. Hoole, 20 February 1844; Box 142, File 1848, no. 71, Hudson to General Secretaries, 6 October 1848; File 1849: no. 3 Hudson to General Secretaries, 6 January 1849; no. 5, Bannister to W. Davies, 16 January 1849; E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London, 1968), p. 430; E.J. Hobsbawn, Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour (London, 1986), p. 26.

faced. In their annual reports after 1860, they frequently alluded to the extreme suffering of many labourers and the injustices that they suffered. Reverend Trotman, for example, blamed the 1862 riots on the actions of young white planters. Reverend Horsford was very angry at the brutalities committed against the labourers who protested in 1862, and Reverend Barratt blamed the harsh measures that were adopted by the authorities for the increase in ill feelings and hostility within the island. In 1881, the missionary for Chateaubelair wrote that poverty had 'pushed many labourers into a state of bewilderment and completely paralysed their energies'.⁽²⁵⁾

Wesleyan missionaries regularly criticised the lives of the African-Caribbean population. Missionaries were opposed to many forms of entertainment enjoyed by labourers. They despised dances, drumming and even theatrical entertainments and were also opposed to gambling and drinking alcohol. One missionary, William Griffith, was threatened and even shot at because he spent much of his time outside rum shops ordering the customers to stop drinking, and snatching and burning their playing cards.⁽²⁶⁾ However, it was the

⁽²⁵⁾ WMMS Box 229, File 1862: no. 85, Trotman to General Secretaries, 24 August 1862; no. 103, Horsford to General Secretaries, 22 December 1862; no. 104, Barratt to General Secretaries, 23 December 1862; WMMS Synod Minutes, Box 165, St. Vincent Minutes, 1881.

⁽²⁶⁾ WMMS Box 145, File 1845, no. 61, Limmex to General Secretaries, 5 November 1845; File 1846, no. 5, Brown to General Secretaries, 23 January 1846; Box 142, File 1851, 25, Elison to General secretaries, 10 May 1851; Box 140, File 1842: no. 65, Bannister to General Secretaries, 10 October 1842; no. 76, Hurd to General Secretaries, 31 December 1842; Box 143, File 1855, no. 40 Griffith to General Secretaries, 20 June 1855.

African-Caribbeans' attitudes towards sexual relations that missionaries found most disturbing. Not only did missionaries expel large numbers for having sexual relations outside of marriage, but they also frequently lectured their congregations in an attempt to convince them that sexual activity was a sin. The language employed by the missionaries reveals the strength of their disgust. They referred to concubinage as 'the greatest human evil' and attempted to teach their congregations 'a Christian disgust for filthy communications and practices'.(27)

As well as attempting to change people's attitudes to sex, missionaries began to question the role of women in their society. During slavery, missionary Churches had provided a social and intellectual outlet for many free coloured women in the British Caribbean. The missionary Churches were also the only organisation that enabled women to dissent from the roles proscribed for them and take a political stance against racism and slavery, as the political activities of free black and coloured men excluded female participation. Therefore, women dominated many mission groups, often taking leadership roles when missionaries were imprisoned or had fled the islands. In Antigua, for example, two sisters led the Wesleyans for years while there were no missionaries on the island, holding prayer and class meetings and converting and instructing new members. In Jamaica, women like Catherine Jarvis faced imprisonment or had their property destroyed

(27) WMMS Synod Minutes, Box 161, St. Vincent Minutes, 1871, 1872.

and their lives threatened because they had assumed leading roles in the Wesleyans Church.⁽²⁸⁾

Women continued to dominate as members and class leaders within the Methodist society after emancipation, but only men were suggested for positions as missionaries or local preachers. Women's limited leadership was also challenged by one missionary. In 1847, fourteen female class leaders in the Biabou circuit resigned as they felt 'insulted and trampled upon but could get no redress'. In fact, the missionary, Reverend Fiddler, had decided to restrict the female input into his meetings and had declared that once they had handed over the money they had raised, the female class leaders should leave. He also took away their voting rights. Although the women objected to Reverend Cullingford, they were told that their complaints were frivolous, and that women in England had no votes.

However, there were very practical reasons why the other missionaries did not follow Fiddler's lead. William Bannister, in a letter explaining the role of women in the St. Vincent circuits, wrote:

'While it is desirable for female leaders to follow the example of their peers in England, in St. Vincent they are very necessary. The female leaders are the principle parties of intelligence in the Meetings and know more about the characters and conduct of the members than the male leaders do'.

(28) Sheena Boa, 'Free Black and Coloured Women in a White Man's Slave Society, Jamaica 1765-1834' (M.Phil thesis, University of the West Indies, 1985), pp. 214-220.

He claimed that in his circuit there were sixty leaders, but only thirteen of them were men and half of these could not read. There were also 1200 female members in his circuit out of a total of 1600, and the male leaders knew little of the conduct of these women.⁽²⁹⁾ However, while women so greatly outnumbered men, it is noticeable that they featured so rarely in missionary anecdotes of classes and conversions. James McBryan, for example, wrote lyrically about his first service in Kingstown describing his joy at seeing tears falling down 'the Cheeks of those Sable sons of the Isles'. He did not mention the majority of his congregation, who would have been female.⁽³⁰⁾

The fund-raising activities of the Wesleyans also highlight the importance of the female membership. Love feasts, when members were expected to bring along and share prepared food, were very popular. Bazaars and tea and cake stalls were also common, and women members were expected to produce artifacts for sale. There were also celebrations at the opening of a new chapel or when a new missionary was welcomed to the island. These events were often very large social occasions, enjoying the patronage of the Lieutenant-Governor and other members of the government. The local newspapers also often reported favourably on the mission's fund-raising events and this clearly helped the members gain a sense of importance and belonging within mainstream

(29) WMMS Box 145, File 1847, no. 12, Bannister to General Secretaries, 12 March 1847.

(30) WMMS Box 145, File 1847, no. 39, McBryan to General Secretaries, 24 July 1847. See also Box 229, File 1861, John Greathead to General Secretaries, 26 June 1861.

society. Large numbers of people looked forward to mission meetings, some travelling many miles to attend. This can be seen in the notes from a murder trial, when many of the witnesses were able to clearly recall the day the victim died, as it coincided with a large missionary meeting. The female witnesses in particular recalled preparing for and attending the meeting. However, women and male labourers were denied real access to leadership and decision making within the Wesleyan Church.(31)

Friendly Societies.

Both Wesleyans and Anglicans introduced freed slaves to friendly societies and a rapid rise in their membership after emancipation enabled workers to insure themselves against illness and old age. The societies were initially started by the Anglican Church, but were overseen by members. Members had to abide by certain rules, including, for those who were married, living faithfully with their spouse. They had to attend meetings regularly and pay their dues on time. In fact, the popularity of these societies, despite the strict codes of practice imposed on the members, caused Methodist missionaries to follow the Anglican lead and introduce their own societies to avoid losing their congregations to their rivals.(32) In 1842, in Stipendiary

(31) WMMS Box 139, File 1840, no. 35, Blackwell to General Secretaries, 27 August 1840; Box 143, File 1847, no 39 McBryan to General Secretaries, 24 July 1847; Box 228, File 1861, no. 85, Barley to General Secretaries, 24 August 1861; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 7 May 1853, Vol. 1, no. 20, 20 May 1854; CO 260/85, Hincks to Labouchere, no. 12, 24 March 1856, Minutes from the Court of the Grand Sessions, 21 February 1856.

Magistrate Sutherland's district, there was a population of around 5000 people, with 1200 members of friendly societies. These societies, two run by the Anglican Church and three by the Methodists, charged each member just over six pence each month. In return, members received assistance from the society when they were too ill to work or had to pay for a burial.⁽³³⁾

Friendly societies' rules were secret and caused some concern to stipendiary magistrates. Wesleyans in particular used them to instil in their members puritanical habits. There were monthly meetings when members could be expelled for adultery and drunkenness and also for trivial offences such as making or repairing musical instruments. British Government officials saw this secrecy and the control exerted by the religious organisations as detrimental to the society as a whole. Both Governor-General Grey and Lieutenant-Governor Doherty wanted the influence of the clergy reduced. Grey countenanced the formation of 'an open, manly and bold character amongst the peasantry' to reduce the 'interference of the clergy with their money'. In 1843, the Assembly disallowed the secrecy of rules governing friendly societies and gave two Justices of the Peace power to revoke the rules of newly formed friendly societies.⁽³⁴⁾ In 1846 there were 5441 members of friendly

(32) WMMS Box 140, File 1840, no. 35, Blackwell to General Secretaries, 27 August 1840.

(33) CO 260/61 Grey to Stanley, no. 14, 19 April 1842, Stipendiary magistrates' reports, Sutherland's report, 1 March 1842.

(34) CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley: no. 7, 29 January 1844, Doherty to Grey, October 17 1843; no. 29, 6 June 1844,

societies in St. Vincent. However, as a result of increasing poverty among labourers, the number decreased to 4863 in 1851, and to 3897 in 1852 after a large number were expelled for non-payment of their dues. Unfortunately, there are no further surviving figures for membership of friendly societies after 1852. In addition, there were probably independent friendly societies which were organised on a village level, but there are no details of these.⁽³⁵⁾

The Wilderness People.

While missionaries and clergy were successful in converting many labourers to Christianity, they failed to meet the spiritual needs of all members of society. One reason was the lack of leadership roles for labourers, especially women, within the European Churches. European Churches were also very restrained and frowned upon open expressions of emotions. Furthermore, the opposition of European Churches to workers' rights encouraged labourers with more radical political views to create their own religious alternatives. Baptist missionaries did not set up stations in St. Vincent, but the island was visited occasionally by North American Baptist preachers whose style and rhetoric were more appealing to some labourers. People

Stipendiary magistrates' reports. The Governor-General's call for an independent society, however was only limited to religious independence. In the same letter Grey also claimed that labourers should not become freeholders, but should be dependant on large land holders.

(35) CO 265/3, St. Vincent Stipendiary Magistrates' Returns, Consolidated tables for February 1846, December 1850 and December 1851.

who wanted to display their religious convictions in different ways therefore chose to develop autonomous organisations.

Sometime around 1846, a new religious group was formed among labourers from the Calder estate who called themselves the Wilderness people. They later became known by government officials and other Europeans as 'Shakers', because they used similar trances and bodily contortions as the Shaker sect which was formed in England in the 1750s. However, members of the group stated that they did not use this designation themselves. Their origins are not known, but an African-Canadian preacher, Mr. Edwards, spent some time on Calder estate in the early 1840s. It was thought by some that he was responsible for establishing the sect by instilling in some of the estate workers certain 'notions' or 'superstitions' concerning the casting out of sins and that his preaching formed the basis of the Wilderness sect. However, according to one missionary, the Wilderness people denied Edward's influence.⁽³⁶⁾

Membership amongst the Wilderness people grew and their influence spread, providing Vincentians with a vibrant, although very strict, religious group. In his work on Caribbean religions, George Simpson describes them as a revivalist movement because of their use of Christian beliefs, Methodist hymns, Baptist rhetoric and African

⁽³⁶⁾ WMMS Box 141, File 1847, no. 20, Fiddler to General Secretaries, 7 May 1847.

trances and 'mournin' (retreating into the countryside to find spiritual understanding).(37)

Many of the early Wilderness people were originally Methodists. Initially, they were tolerated by Reverend Fiddler, the Wesleyan preacher of the Biabou circuit, although he was concerned about their use of convulsions and their noisy prayer meetings. But he was also impressed by their morals, which he described as 'the most consistent'. He was also aware that other missionaries expected him to expel the Wilderness people, but he believed that this would only strengthen their influence. In 1846, Fiddler reported in the District meeting that he believed that the Wilderness sect would pose no lasting danger to the Wesleyans. However, in 1849, after Fiddler had left St. Vincent, the new Wesleyan minister felt that the Wilderness people had got out of control, and 100 were expelled. The missionary wrote:

'they insisted on holding meetings independent of and separate from our own, in which they indulged in the wildest enthusiasms and anathematising (sic) all who would not join in their excess, indeed from the first we clearly saw that an "imperium in imperie" would never do and it is much to be regretted that our Predecessors allowed such an organisation within our societies when at first by the expulsion of the ringleaders it might have been arrested, but being

(37) George Simpson, 'Religions in the Caribbean', in Martin Kilson and Robert Rotberg (eds.), The African Diaspora (Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 296.

allowed to proceed with impunity they became more insolent and determined and led many astray - the loss, however, we are for the moment suffering in our numbers and finances is more than compensated in the purity in our Church.'(38)

Two years later a further 200 members were expelled from the Biabou circuit. The missionary blamed the increase in the membership of the Wilderness people on the dispersal of the villages. He claimed that he was not able to visit all his people regularly, so the Wilderness people were able to, as he expressed it, 'seek to ensnare and lead astray the unwary'. By 1852, the sect had again increased in numbers and held nightly prayer meetings in many villages. They had also built a chapel in Lander's village. The sect also moved to other areas in the north of Charlotte parish. In 1856, the Wilderness people had also begun to refer to themselves as the 'Penitents' and the 'New Light'. They had also developed a rhetoric to encompass their beliefs in their religious authority. Their influence continued to grow, and Wesleyan missionaries expressed grave concern about their actions and the claims that they made. In their report at the district meetings they wrote:

Professing to have a revelation from Heaven and calling themselves the New Light who profess the Spirit of Prophecy, Conversion and Power which supersedes all

(38) WMMS Box 141, File 1847, no. 20 Fiddler to General Secretaries, 7 May 1847; Box 142, File 1849, no. 42, Hudson to General Secretaries, 22 November 1849.

that is found elsewhere, they compose and sing in uproarious strains... they remain for a time in happy assurance of having received the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. With a little that is good is now mangled much that is extravagant, licentious and blasphemous'.

In 1881, missionaries reported that 'Shakerism' had taken over in the villages and estates around George Town and, in Overland village, nearly all the inhabitants had been converted.(39)

During the early 1850s, Reverend Thomas Browne became concerned about the spreading influence of the Wilderness people. Browne referred to the sect as 'Shakers', and, in a letter to the Wesleyan General Secretaries, he blamed their increase in numbers on the apathy of the Wesleyan missionaries. He stated that one of the leaders of the Wilderness people had been a member of his Church, but that when she became a Shaker, he expelled her. However, she had later been allowed to join the Wesleyans.(40)

The Wilderness people also began to attract the attention of government officials. In 1850, Lieutenant-

(39) WMMS Box 142: File 1851, no. 1, Hudson to General Secretaries, 10 January 1851; File 1852, no. 36 Hurd to General Secretaries, 13 May 1852; WMMS Synod Minutes: Box 154, St. Vincent Minutes, 1847; Box 157, St. Vincent Minutes 1856; Box 165, St. Vincent Minutes 1881. In the twentieth century, Shakers referred to themselves as the United Penetential Faith, and local people called them the converted. See Edward L. Cox, 'Religious Intolerance and Persecution: The Shakers of St. Vincent, 1900-1934', Journal of Caribbean History, 20 no. 2 (1994), p. 236.

(40) WMMS Box 142, File 1851, no. 78, Browne to General Secretaries, 21 September 1851.

Governor Campbell referred to them in his report accompanying the Blue Book, as 'a singular sect' with a large number of 'notaries', whose influence would be diminished when people had 'a better understanding of the truth'. He believed that the group was initiated by Americans, and that their doctrines were similar to the Quakers, 'mingled with the external demonstrations similar to those which are assumed by the Shakers'. The following year he reported that the sect had declined, but in 1852, the Wilderness people were criticised by Chief Justice Sharpe. In his address to the Grand Jury, he referred to them as a group of 'fanatics' and demanded that 'the places at which these people assemble should be known to the police.. and if they appear to scoff at Christian religion they should be arrested and charged'. His sentiments were echoed by the Grand Jury, who responded that 'we fear that this sect of fanatics will tend to increase immorality and crime if not speedily eradicated'.⁽⁴¹⁾ The authorities attacked the Wilderness sect again in 1862, when members of the labouring community rioted against reduced wages and unfair conditions. The authorities discovered that one of the ringleaders, George Bascombe, and some of his followers were members of the Wilderness Church. In retaliation for the riots and in an attempt to destroy the sect's influence,

(41) CO 260/73, Colebrooke to Earl Grey, no. 21, 24 June 1850, Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book; CO 260/77, Colebrooke to Earl Grey, no. 26, 22 June 1851, Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 8 May 1851.

the militia destroyed the Wilderness chapel at Mount Bentwick.⁽⁴²⁾

There were several reasons why the Wilderness people were singled out for persecution. One reason was probably because they were completely independent of European influence. As Reverend Hudson, a Methodist missionary wrote, 'they insisted on holding meetings independent and separate from our own'. Europeans feared that these meetings were subversive and could give members the opportunity to plot against them. European authorities and Churches were also apprehensive that the religious philosophies of the Wilderness people were unknown, that the leadership was sporadic and involved many people and that one of their doctrines was 'Equality'. The Wilderness people were able to travel freely around the free villages and could take advantage of the dispersed communities which had caused Church attendance among Wesleyans to lapse.

There was also discomfort that immigrant workers joined the sect. Chief Justice Sharpe voiced his concerns about the Wilderness sect when it was discovered that a number of Africans working on Escape estate were members in 1852. In 1862, Barbadian labourers were found to be leading members of the sect at Mount Bentwick estate. These immigrants were probably attracted to the Wilderness sect because of the welcome and sense of belonging it offered to people who were alienated from European society. However, it was this sense

(42) For further details on the 1862 riots see chapter 10.

of belonging and the sect's use of African traditions that most troubled the authorities.(43)

Europeans also disliked the Wilderness people's style of worship. The Anglican and Catholic Churches were ritualistic and reinforced class differences through segregated pews and the use of various chants. Wesleyan Methodism encouraged greater expressions of feelings from the congregation, particularly tears of contrition, but opposed dance and drumming. The Wilderness people, on the other hand, provided their members with space to display strong emotions, and they incorporated African cultural expressions through the use of trances and dance. They usually met at night, and their ceremonies could last for the whole night. This was seen by missionaries as especially dangerous. Henry Hurd wrote that the Wilderness people 'were in the habit of going into the woods to hold prayer meetings, which were generally continued all night and provided the fruitful source of great irregularities and crime'. He did not state what type of 'irregularities and crime' took place, but it is probable that he suspected sexual activities, as Wesleyans tended to judge African-Caribbean people as 'very sensual'.(44) In contrast, Fiddler remarked on the importance of sexual morals among the Wilderness sect, and anthropological studies on Shaker

(43) WMMS Box 142, File 1851, no. 1, Hudson to General Secretaries, 10 January 1851; Box 229, File 1862, Greathead to General Secretaries, 24 October 1862; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 8 May 1851.

(44) WMMS Box 142, File 1852: no. 36 Hurd to General Secretaries, 13 May 1852; no. 83, Elison to General Secretaries, 21 May 1852.

groups in Trinidad in the 1930s by Frances and Melville Herskovits also revealed that sexual abstinence was seen as extremely important for unmarried members.(45)

Anglicans and Methodist preachers were completely unable to understand or condone the Wilderness people's use of trances as an expression of religious fervour. However, these trances, which George Simpson referred to as 'religious thrills', were central to the Wilderness sect. Reverend Browne revealed his intolerance of the Wilderness people's expressions of faith when he used the terms 'animal excitement' and 'bodily contortions' to describe these trances. He claimed that he ordered one of his congregation to give up 'shaking, shouting all night at the top of her voice, getting into convulsions and literally acting the part of a maniac' and return to Anglicanism. The woman, Mrs Dickson, replied that she could never give up 'shaking' as it was a sign of the Holy Spirit.(46)

The Wilderness sect continued to thrive during the nineteenth century, and in the early 1900s, it was reported that there were thirty-eight separate 'Shaker' meeting houses. During the early part of the twentieth century, the name Shaker was used consistently to describe the sect, and they were again singled out for persecution. In 1908, there was an inquiry into the sect, and local officials decided

(45) WMMS Box 141, File 1847, no. 20, Fiddler to General Secretaries, 7 May 1847; Frances and Melville Herskovits, Trinidad Village (New York, 1947), p.

(46) Simpson, 'Religions in the Caribbean', p. 309; WMMS Box 142, File 1851, no. 78, Browne to General Secretaries, 21 September 1851.

that they should deny the Shakers acceptance as a religious group and prosecute them as a public nuisance. In 1912, the sect was declared illegal and during the next two decades, large numbers of people were arrested and charged under this Ordinance. Some members fled to Trinidad during this period, and the movement grew there to such an extent that the Trinidad authorities also passed a law against them in 1915. In 1938, these persecutions ended in St. Vincent, but it was not until 1965, that the Ordinance was actually repealed.⁽⁴⁷⁾

The Wilderness sect survived the intolerance and persecutions of the authorities because of the sense of belonging it conveyed to its members. Frances and Melville Herskovits describe this as 'a degree of actual and psychological participation that makes the individual worshipper feel that he or she is a useful a necessary part of the world about him.' The sect was seen as dangerous because it was out of the Europeans' control. It gave disaffected members of society the chance to meet and worship without the interference of any Europeans. The leaders and followers were all local African-Caribbean labourers, therefore, they were able to convert others to their sect. It also allowed resident estate workers, and immigrants, who were the least powerful members of the society, a chance to assume leadership roles and celebrate their African heritage. The sect also practised a large degree of equality between the sexes. Women were able to

⁽⁴⁷⁾ See Cox, 'Religious Intolerance and Persecution', pp. 208-242.

hold strong leadership roles within the sect, which were denied them by Methodists, Anglicans and Catholics. Browne described one woman who led the sect near him as a sort of 'Anna Lease' [sic] in reference to Ann Lee, who had formed the original Shaker community in England in 1750.(48)

Throughout the Caribbean, similar sects evolved. In Jamaica, for example, during the 1860s Myalists were able to convert many people as they toured the island during the 'Great Revival'. Labourers were drawn to the movement because of the poverty and alienation that many experienced. Robert Stewart has explained the influence of Myalism as 'a manifestation of black identity' which 'combined the best of Christian hope with the this-world directed power of African traditional religion. It prevented a despairing acceptance of the post-emancipation social order as predestined and unshakable'. While it is certain that the Wilderness people were heavily influenced by their African heritage and used African forms of religious expression such as trances and convulsions, it is noticeable that in Britain in the early nineteenth century very similar sects also evolved. Wesleyan converts in remote rural areas developed their own religious cults, often incorporating similar trances and convulsions. As in the Caribbean, these sects created significant leadership roles for women and other dispossessed labourers. Sects such as the Welsh Jumpers, the Ranters and the Tent Methodists bear a striking

(48) Herskovits and Herskovits, Trinidad Village p. 189; WMMS Box 142, File 1851, no. 78, Browne to General Secretaries, 21 September 1851.

resemblance to the Wilderness people. The Tent Methodists even incorporated retreats into the forest as part of their rituals. The similarities of the Vincentian and British sects were not the result of any influence or contact between the different groups. Rather they suggest that labourers from diverse cultural backgrounds shared comparable requirements for release from daily hardships and incorporated similar mechanisms for escapism.⁽⁴⁹⁾

The Wilderness people formed the largest and most enduring autonomous religious group for labourers in St. Vincent, but missionaries sporadically described similar groups led by local 'prophets'. For example, a woman prophet forbade labourers to work on Fridays on one estate and another predicted the end of the world. Missionary John Banfield also complained of one group who disturbed his meetings by storming into the chapel, dancing and singing. This took place in Chateaubelair in 1841, and the group appeared to be similar to the Wilderness people, as they were noted for their practice of jumping and contorting their bodies to receive messages from the Holy Spirit. These messages could only be received when they were lying on their backs. There is no surviving evidence to link the two sects and very few details on any of these groups. Women, however, were reported to be influential as prophets, reflecting current research by historians of Caribbean

(49) Robert Stewart, Religion and Society in Post-Emancipation Jamaica (Knoxville, 1992), pp. 144-145; Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class p. 426.

slavery who have suggested that slave women were the main guardians of cultural and religious practices.⁽⁵⁰⁾

It is also possible that these prophet-led groups were actually practising Myalism. Research into African-Caribbean religions has highlighted the important influence that Myalism had on many Caribbean communities. However, none of the Colonial Office reports, missionary letters or travel accounts of St. Vincent report any instances of Myal groups. This may have been because of the basic ignorance of Europeans in distinguishing between different African-Caribbean beliefs.⁽⁵¹⁾

Obeah

Obeah was widely practised in St. Vincent after the abolition of slavery. It incorporates magic, charms, rituals, poisons and medicines. Believers employ Obeah practitioners to provide them with love potions, protect them from harm, cure illnesses, detect thieves and also to harm or kill their enemies. It is believed that Obeah originated in Africa and was widely practised in slave communities. In her study of legal systems in Antigua,

(50) The St. Vincent Chronicle and Public Gazette, 14 May 1839; WMS Box 139, File 1841: no.2, Banfield to General Secretaries, 2 January 1841; no.52, Banfield to General Secretaries, 29 September 1841; Barbara Bush, Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838 (London, 1990), p. 6.

(51) Stewart, Religion and Society in Post-Emancipation Jamaica pp. 140-145; Orlando Patterson, The Sociology of Slavery (London, 1967), pp. 186-188.

Mindie Lazarus-Black has suggested that Obeah replaced the main European legal system for many Antiguans.(52)

The practice of Obeah gave men and women from the poorest sections of society a chance to gain respect and influence. Obeah men and women were also reputedly feared by their neighbours. Obeah was a secret art which few outsiders witnessed but which generated many comments from European travellers and residents in the nineteenth-century Caribbean. For example, John Anderson, a stipendiary magistrate, described one of the most common and better known forms of Obeah in his journal. This was the use of 'the Shifter', to ascertain who was guilty of theft. The Obeah man or woman would use a pair of scissors or a key to point out the thief. Other writers have described sessions where animals or glass were supposedly removed from the body of an ill person or poison was administered.(53)

Obeah was practised by both men and women, but it is noticeable that the term Obeah-man was far more commonly used. Reverend Banbury, an Anglican minister from Jamaica, described Obeah practitioners in primarily masculine terms, although he admitted that Obeah-women were also common. This bias has been repeated in some modern work. For

(52) Patterson, The Sociology of Slavery pp. 187-191; Mindi Lazarus-Black, Legitimate Acts and Illegal Encounters: Law and Society in Antigua and Barbuda (Washington, 1994), pp. 45-46.

(53) University of Aberdeen, Manuscript, John Anderson's Journal 1836-1839, p. 85; Reverend T. Banbury, Jamaica Superstitions, or the Obeah Book: A Complete Treatise of the Absurdities Believed in by the People of the Island (Kingston, 1894), p. 6; Lazarus-Black, Legitimate Acts p. 158.

example, in his work on slavery, Orlando Patterson claimed that Obeah-women were mainly employed merely to produce love potions. However, accounts by nineteenth-century observers such as Mrs. Carmichael and Charles Kingsley described women as being involved in other far more serious forms of Obeah. These writers revealed that women as well as men were skilled in the uses of poisons and were also employed to harm and even kill enemies. (54)

In St. Vincent, as in other British Caribbean islands, Obeah was both ridiculed and feared by Europeans. White inhabitants tended to note the negative aspects of Obeah rather than its healing work. Slave owner Mrs. Carmichael, for example, claimed it was 'nothing more or less than a belief in Witchcraft', but she was also aware of its dangers, stating that if a slave was told by an Obeah woman that he or she had been 'obeahed', the slave would soon die. Stipendiary magistrate John Anderson also claimed that one apprentice girl committed suicide because an Obeah practitioner had accused her of a theft. The language used by opponents of Obeah reveal the fear that it generated. For example, Reverend Banbury described Obeah as 'wicked, immoral and debasing, .. most Cruel, filthy in its practices, shameful and degrading'. He portrayed Obeah-men as the 'agent incarnate of Satan' and 'a dirty looking fellow with a sore foot'.(55)

(54) Banbury, Jamaica Superstitions pp. 5-19; Patterson, The Sociology of Slavery p. 189; Carmichael, Domestic Manners Vol. 1, p. 253; Charles Kingsley, At Last a Christmas in the West Indies (2 Vols. London, 1871), Vol. 2, pp. 132-140.

(55) Carmichael, Domestic Manners Vol. 1, p. 253; Anderson's Journal p. 85; Banbury, Jamaica Superstitions pp. 5, 7.

Europeans also objected to the wealth accrued by Obeah men and women. According to Lieutenant-Governor McDowell, Obeah was practised by 'a few charlatans who ... impose on the credulity of the Vulgar by pretending to discover stolen goods, and to administer to all sorts of diseases, specifics and charms which they sell at an exorbitant rate'. Charles Kingsley also criticised Obeah men and women in Trinidad. He claimed that one woman was responsible for many 'notorious murders' and that she had sold 'poisons, charms and philtres and waxed fat on her trade for many years'.⁽⁵⁶⁾

The St. Vincent Slave Codes had made the practice of Obeah punishable by death. However, this law could no longer be enforced when slavery was abolished. In 1854 there were renewed calls to criminalise Obeah. The local Legislature attempted to list Obeah as a crime under the Petty Offences Act, which could be punished by flogging. To justify this clause, Lieutenant-Governor McDowell claimed that 'the existence of Obeah practices here and the belief in them by a great proportion of the lower classes, is a fact. There is no disguising that fact'. Charles Kingsley claimed that he was also informed by 'one who knows that island well' that St. Vincent was 'the chief centre of this detestable system' where 'some sort of secret college or School of the Diabolical exist. Its emissaries spread over the islands, fattening themselves at the expense of their dupes and exercising no small political authority'. This

(56) CO 260/81, Colebrooke to Earl Grey, no. 66, 28 September 1854, McDowell to Colebrooke, 2 January 1854; Kingsley, At Last a Christmas in the West Indies vol. 2, pp. 138-139.

claim that St. Vincent was the centre for Obeah is not found in any other available sources. It was certainly an exaggeration which shows the strength of opposition to the practice of Obeah and the terror that it provoked.⁽⁵⁷⁾

The clause pertaining to Obeah in the Petty offences Act was not allowed, although McDowell also argued that witches could be punished by the treadmill in England, and that people therefore wanted the equivalent powers to deal with Obeah in St. Vincent. Governor-General Colebrooke would not allow this clause to be made law because he claimed that it looked back 'for precedents amongst the obsolete records of barbarous ages'. Colebrooke's objection to the clause was not based on any sympathy for Obeah men and women. On the contrary, he believed that by naming the practice, it was given credence. He claimed that in Barbados, Obeah had disappeared, as the people had forgotten about it and that this would be the case in St. Vincent if the clergy exerted enough influence.⁽⁵⁸⁾ However, Obeah is reputedly still widely practised throughout the Caribbean.

Many labourers in St. Vincent also had strong beliefs in a spirit world. Charles Day described the fear that one boy expressed when Day suggested he walked home alone after dark through some cane fields. Day also recalled with

⁽⁵⁷⁾ CO 260/81, Colebrooke to Earl Grey, no. 66, 28 September 1854, McDowell to Colebrooke, 2 January 1854; Kingsley, At Last a Christmas in the West Indies vol. 2, p. 140.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ CO 260/81, Colebrooke to Earl Grey, no. 66, 28 September 1854; McDowell to Colebrooke, 2 January 1854; Colebrooke to McDowell, 17 January 1854; Colebrooke to McDowell, 12 April 1854.

amusement coming across what he called a 'fetish'. Day and another European man took the fetish, which was some sort of miniature coffin placed near some provision grounds to deter thieves, from its position and put it in the middle of the track to a village. They did this to frighten the villagers, who would then be unable to use the track. It is likely that Day's lack of sensitivity towards the beliefs of African-Caribbean labourers was shared by other European residents.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Conclusion.

After the abolition of slavery many labourers embraced Christianity. Its message offering rewards in the after-life were seductive to labourers who lived in poverty and had suffered so much during slavery. The efforts of the Anglican and Wesleyan ministers to convert labourers, and their establishment of friendly societies, schools and local Churches gave a further impetus to labourers who wanted to improve their social and educational standing.

However, despite efforts from both European-Christian and governmental bodies, some African-Vincentians chose to retain and strengthen their own independent religious practices. In her work on the 1831 slave rebellion in Jamaica, Abigail Bakan refers to religion as 'the primary ideological arena of class struggle.'⁽⁵⁶⁾ In post-emancipation St. Vincent, religion was also a focal point in

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Day, Five Years Residence Vol. 1, p. 128.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Abigail Bakan, Ideology and Class Conflict in Jamaica: The Politics of Rebellion (Montreal, 1990), p. 50.

conflicts between the authorities and labourers. The intolerance of Europeans to African-Caribbean influenced religions was part of a wider challenge for control. That the Shaker sect and Obeah remain such robust forces in present day St. Vincent is testimony to the perseverance of African-Caribbean men and women in retaining much of their cultural hegemony, despite fierce opposition and persecution.

It is also noteworthy that only the African-Caribbean religious sects offered space for labourers, and especially women members, to develop their potential for leadership and decision making. Women prophets could persuade whole estates to follow them. Women among the Wilderness people could preach and lead their services. Obeah-women were also feared and respected. The European-based Christian Churches, however, required their Caribbean female members to mirror their sisters in England and take minor roles, supporting missionary work through cake making, fund raising and teaching, rather than through leading and preaching. It is therefore not surprising that many strong-minded women such as Mrs. Dickson, and men like George Bascombe chose to embrace a religion that gave them leadership opportunities, a sense of belonging and unity, and the belief that through their actions, they could improve their moral and spiritual well-being.

Kingstown St. Vincent from Cane Garden Point, 1837
by Lieut. Caddy



Chapter Eight.

Urban Life.

The emancipation of slavery gave many people the opportunity to transform their lives. Young people in particular chose to quit estates to escape the drudgery and tedium of plantation work and rural life. They moved to towns in search of new opportunities to improve their skills, earning capacities and social and cultural lives. Despite the cramped living conditions of the towns, urban dwellers were able to achieve an independence from the constant surveillance of plantation overseers. Towns supplied young people with more exciting entertainment than plantation and rural villages. However, people also experienced greater deprivation in the towns, and it was not uncommon for very poor or mentally unstable vagrants to die of hunger on the streets. This chapter aims to explore the different life experiences of town dwellers. It will examine work opportunities and labour relations within the towns. In addition, it will investigate town dwellers' utilisation of entertainment as a form of cultural power, as they took command of the streets and the authorities' attempts to restrict these actions and impose their own forms of order and control. It will also investigate how town dwellers' actions reveal their attitudes to race, class and gender.

Physical Characteristics of the Towns.

At the time of emancipation, St. Vincent had six towns, although most of them were really little more than villages in metropolitan terms. The capital, and largest town was Kingstown, a harbour town on the south coast, which by the 1830s included the rapidly expanding suburbs made up from marginal estate lands of Edinborough, New Montrose and Kingstown Park. The other main towns were also coastal; Calliaqua and George Town on the windward coast and Layou, Barrouallie and Chateaubelair on the leeward coast.

The population of Kingstown expanded rapidly after 1838. In 1825, there were about 3000 inhabitants. According to the 1844 census the population had risen to 4769. By 1861, despite serious cholera and small pox epidemics in the 1850s, Kingstown had 5101 inhabitants and, in 1871, there were 5394 residents. It had a primarily young population: in 1861, 3419 of the residents were under the age of thirty and 2408 under twenty years old. Kingstown also had a predominantly female population. The 1851 census gave the total population of the town as 4983, with 3021 females. In 1861, there were 3088 women and 2017 men. Unfortunately, census figures were not very accurate and probably underestimated the number of people in both the towns and the rural areas. In fact, Lieutenant-Governor Campbell stated that the only deductions that could be drawn from the 1851 census were 'such as beginning in error and ending in fallacy'. However, he confirmed the predominance of female inhabitants, which he stated could be clearly noticed by the crowds on the streets. The other towns were

significantly smaller, and according to the census, Calliaqua had a population of 593 in 1851, Barrouallie had 334 residents, and Chateaubelair had a population of 446. Layou and George Town had even smaller populations, each with less than 200 residents in 1844. In all these towns, women outnumbered men.⁽¹⁾

During the nineteenth century, Kingstown's own decline mirrored the collapse of the island's economy. In 1831, the main buildings were described by Charles Shepherd, a planter historian who resided in St. Vincent, as substantial rather than elegant. He noted that there were around 300 houses made with stone lower floors and wooden upper floors which were the homes of the wealthier inhabitants and many small wooden houses which 'however convenient they may be for the lower classes give an air of poverty and inferiority to the whole'. John Anderson's impressions were far less favourable. In 1836, he gave the following description of the town:

'The badly paved dirty streets where broken bottles, hoops of iron and other rubbish lie huddled before the doors, the mean appearance of the low roofed stores and huckster shops, the defaced and mouldering houses, the naked appearance of the planked uncovered floors and

(1) Charles Shepherd, An Historical Account of the Island of St. Vincent (1831) (rpt. London, 1977), p. 14; CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 53, 18 November 1844, Census returns for 1844; CO 260/77, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1852, Lieutenant-Governor Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book; CO 260/97, Walker to Newcastle, no. 54, 12 July 1862, Census returns; St. Vincent Government Gazette, 28 September 1871, Census returns.

walls of the best inhabited tenements ... bring in painful contrast all harmonised comforts of home.'(2)

Little appears to have been done to improve the city and in 1847 the Lieutenant-Governor complained of both the overcrowding of the houses and the 'every day evils resulting from want of proper ventilation from deposits of damp and decomposed matter mainly produced from the ruinous condition of many of the dwellings'.(3)

William Sewell, an American traveller to the island in 1862 was also struck by the impoverished state of 'the quaint and antiquated and dilapidated "city" of Kingstown' He claimed that 'the appearance of decay which the capital of St. Vincent presents and the fact of its diminished exportation of sugar, have brought it under the category of ruined West Indian islands'. Sewell was also disappointed by the state of the Botanical gardens, which had suffered from years of neglect. However, when Lieutenant Caddy sketched the city in 1837 he did not show the deterioration or include the huts in his drawings. The Kingstown he portrayed was an idealised sanitised version to encourage the wealthy to purchase his prints.(4)

(2) Shepherd, An Historical Account of the Island of St. Vincent p. 6; University of Aberdeen, Manuscript, John Anderson's Journal, 1836-1839, p. 10.

(3) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 23 October 1847.

(4) William Sewell, The Ordeal of Free Labour in the British West Indies (London, 1862), pp. 76-77. Lieutenant J.H. Caddy's painting of Kingstown, St. Vincent in 1837 is reprinted on page 277.

Kingstown had three main streets with connecting lanes. On the sea front, the wealthy merchant families had stores and houses and in the two streets behind were the smaller hucksters' stores and houses. Scattered throughout were the small wooden huts of the newly-emancipated slaves which gave the city its air of poverty. The wealthier residents sometimes suggested pulling down these huts. In 1840, for example, the town residents decided to pull down all the sheds in the market place and the 'dilapidated' houses in Middle Street. In 1853, there were also demands to demolish the house on lot 77 in the town centre as it was decaying and overcrowded.⁽⁵⁾ These small houses and overcrowded yards annoyed the wealthier residents because the wooden houses were closely packed together, and this helped the spread of contagious diseases. They were also often the source of fires. For example, in 1846 there was a fire in Back Street which destroyed many of these homes and threatened the homes of other inhabitants. The newspaper which reported the fire claimed that the houses which had been allowed to remain there 'under sufferance' should be pulled down and the land purchased by the town wardens to prevent future houses being built.⁽⁶⁾

The decaying state of the city and the residents' and authorities' unwillingness to carry out any repairs is a reflection of the apathy pervasive in the society as a whole. Residents complained about the city, but a lack of

(5) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 2 May 1840; 6 August 1853.

(6) *Ibid*, 18 July 1846.

funding and organisation ensured that improvements were not made. It was not until a large part of the town was destroyed by fire in 1866 that there were any plans to implement a supply of water to the town, and this was not completed until 1871.⁽⁷⁾

After emancipation, suburbs around Kingstown and the other towns expanded rapidly, and small house plots were bought up and sub divided by labourers and skilled workers from surrounding estates. In Kingstown, house plots within the three main streets were extremely expensive and could sell for up to £400 sterling. But in waste lands of estates, they were affordable to many labourers. Family groups often bought plots together and divided them into smaller parcels. Other families built additional huts within their plots which they rented to others. One small plot of land could house six or seven groups of people. Land from the Montrose estate, which formed the suburb of Rose Place, cost in the region of eighty pounds for a half lot of about eight hundred square feet in 1840. Half plots in Kingstown Park estate were sold at around twenty-five pounds. In the smaller towns, plots of land were cheaper. Robert Cowdrey, a planter, sold larger plots of land from his Layou Hill estate in the town of Layou for between ten and twenty-five pounds.⁽⁸⁾

(7) CO 260/118, Rawson to Kimberley, no. 16, 3 May 1873, 16 April 1873, Laborde to Rawson.

(8) Descriptions of some of the yards in Kingstown can be found in CO 260/85, Hincks to Labouchere, no. 12, 24 March 1856, Trial of Maria Durham; and Charles Day, Five Years Residence in the West Indies (2 Vols. London, 1852), Vol. 2, p. 106; For land prices see St. Vincent Court House Land Sale Deeds, 1840, 1842, 1843.

Other planters were less willing to contribute to the establishment of suburbs, but as their debts increased, this was often forced on them. Reverend Browne, the owner of Grand Sable estate, was forced by his creditors to sell parcels of land on the outskirts of George Town to raise money. House and garden plots here cost between sixteen and thirty pounds.⁽⁹⁾

Public Institutions.

Despite its appearance of decay, Kingstown offered its inhabitants greater access to employment, education, worship and entertainment. The abolition of slavery resulted in a need for more public buildings; schools, churches and chapels, a hospital and an enlarged prison were all required to cater for the newly freed. Health, education and law became public rather than private institutions, as slave holders lost their powers to punish and relinquished their responsibilities to supply medical treatment and care for the old and infirm. The Legislature found it difficult to embrace the concept of public responsibilities and funding was a major problem for all the public institutions. The prison was small and cramped, it was located in an unhealthy part of the town surrounded by swamps and its building was in need of repair. However, very little was done to improve the structure of the prison despite complaints from the prison inspector, Robert Sutherland, and the other stipendiary magistrates. Lieutenant-Governor Campbell

⁽⁹⁾ Deeds 1846-1850.

described the prison in 1850 as having 'a bad situation and a very vicious original construction'.(10)

In 1837, in response to criticisms made by several abolitionists, the British Government sent an Inspector of Prisons, John Pringle, to the West Indies. As a result of Pringle's findings, the local authorities were forced to make some changes, particularly in respect to the treatment of female prisoners. In 1840, a matron was employed in the Kingstown jail and was required to retain sole charge of the female inmates. Men and women prisoners were to be segregated as were debtors from felons. In addition, the treadmill was abandoned.(11)

In later years, concern was occasionally expressed about the unhealthiness of the jail when there were white inmates. One planter, imprisoned for manslaughter, died from a fever he contracted in jail in 1843, and in 1851, after the death of another white prisoner the Lieutenant-Governor claimed that in future whites should not be sent to the jail. In fact, this was not practical. However, one of the consequences of the death of the white prisoners was a report revealing the inadequate diet in the prison, which had consisted of bread and salt fish. Vegetables, gruel and fresh meat or fish were offered once a week. These were introduced for the benefit of European inmates, but

(10) St. Vincent Archives, 91002 3/3, Dispatches, MacGregor to Tyler, 19 October 1839; CO 260/59, Darling to Russell, no. 10, 14 August 1841, President Brown to Darling 4 August 1841; CO 260/73, Colebrooke to Earl Grey, no. 21, 24 June 1850, Lieutenant-Governor Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book.

(11) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 22 February 1840.

ironically, for eighteen months after their introduction no white people were imprisoned.⁽¹²⁾

The conditions of police cells in other towns were also very poor. In the early 1840s, many of the police cells lacked even the minimal essentials of water, soap and blankets, making them unpleasant and unhealthy for inmates. Thirty years later, their conditions had not improved. According to one police magistrate, it was common for the police to use the cells as rubbish tips, discarding stale food and other matter in the cells and then forcing prisoners to stay in the resulting 'mass of putrid filth'. Furthermore, there were rumours of abuse committed against women in local police cells. William Smith claimed that women from his estate had been molested by officers in police cells. This was never substantiated, and Government officials did not consider Smith to be a reliable source of information. However, there were no women police officers to care for female prisoners so abuse was possible. In 1875, a woman who had recently miscarried and was arrested for causing a nuisance in the streets had buckets of cold water thrown over her when she complained noisily about her treatment in the Kingstown cells. In this case, the police deliberately humiliated her and used excessive force against her.⁽¹³⁾

(12) CO 260/75, Colebrooke to Earl Grey, no. 18, 31 May 1851, Campbell to Colebrooke, 11 January 1851; Hamilton to Pakington, no. 17, 24 July 1852, Lieutenant-Governor Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book.

(13) St. Vincent Archives, 91002 3/3, Dispatches, MacGregor to Tyler, 19 October 1841; CO 260/91, Hinks to Labouchere, no. 4, 4 January 1858, Walker to Hinks, 10 December 1857; CO

Thomas Holt has argued that jail keepers in Jamaica were often sadistic and used a variety of terror tactics to maintain control. In St. Vincent, also, there are indications that prison turnkeys were at best indifferent to the conditions of the inmates. For example, in 1866, Mary James was convicted of infanticide and sentenced to death. When she was brought to the scaffold, she begged permission to sing a hymn. The Chief Justice allowed this. However, when she had finished her singing, she was ordered to step forward onto the trap door, but she pulled off the covers from over her eyes. When she realised that they wanted her to tread on the trap door, she panicked and tried to pull away. As a result, the turnkey and a police officer grappled with her and tried to force her onto the trap door. According to the newspaper, The Witness, an unseemly struggle took place, and the Colonial Secretary, horrified by these scenes rode off to the Governor's house to have the execution stopped. Before he could return, however, the two men had overpowered Mary and pushed her onto the floor over the trap door. When the trap opened, Mary's body fell through it head first. The Witness reporter wrote that he believed that she was by that time already dead. Incompetence, callousness and brutality had denied Mary James an humane and dignified death.(14)

321/7, Freeling to Carnarvan, no. 67, 30 October 1875, The Witness, 15 July 1875.

(14) Thomas Holt, The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938 (Baltimore, 1992), p. 106; The Witness, 22 November 1886. The story of Mary James' execution had a lasting and profound effect within the island. When I visited St. Vincent in 1996, a resident related to me the story of a woman who was hanged before the man with her pardon could reprieve her.

Another example of prison officers' indifference to the plight of African-Caribbean prisoners occurred in 1882 when a young boy died while in custody. He had complained of chest pains because he had fallen off a cliff. The police and prison doctor ignored his complaints, and he died of internal injuries. As a result of this death, and the death of a woman prisoner who died during child birth, the Lieutenant-Governor ordered an investigation into the conditions within the prison. He discovered that male and female prisoners were not kept apart, and that the jailor ordered female prisoners to visit his house without the presence of the matron. This was probably considered a perk for prison officers. In 1879, one prisoner gave birth and named one of the jailors as the father.(15)

The day-to-day treatment of women prisoners in the jails also differed from that of men. There were far fewer women prisoners, but because the matron did not live within the jail, they were forced to spend most of their sentence locked in their rooms. The matron was ordered to visit the jail at least five times a day to let out the women but, in 1841, the prison inspector, Robert Sutherland, described her attendance as far from satisfactory. In addition, while men prisoners sometimes performed hard labour outside the jail on public roads, women who were sentenced to hard labour had to endure the tedious and back breaking task of stone

(15) CO 321/63, Robinson to Derby, no. 11, 15 February 1883; CO 321/64, Robinson to Derby, no. 43, 16 May 1883; The Witness, 4 December 1879. The matron was sacked in 1882, when it was discovered that the second female prisoner conceived while in jail. The Witness, 17 August 1882.

breaking.⁽¹⁶⁾ In St. Vincent today, this discrimination continues. Male prisoners are allowed to work under supervision on public projects while women prisoners are kept locked up all day.

The shaving of women's hair remained a problematical issue. In St. Vincent, it was common to shave women's heads when they entered and when they left jail. Government officials believed that this was hygienic and, more importantly, a way of curbing female criminal impulses. In other Caribbean islands, hair cropping was also common and the prison authorities used hair cropping as a means of shaming female offenders. In Jamaica, Barbados, the Virgin islands and Bermuda, prison officers reported it was used as a deterrent. In the Bahamas, the police authorities reported that they used hair cropping as a threat to a woman who had been convicted sixty-three times. As a result she maintained 'perfect docility'. However, in 1872, in response to questioning by the Colonial Office, Rennie decided to disallow hair cropping except for second offenders. During the period covered in this study, only one middle-class white woman was admitted to the jail for a misdemeanour. She was Abigail Brisbane, a young woman who created a disturbance during a church service and demanded to be tried. Her treatment was radically different from the other women; her hair was not shaved, she was put in the debtors prison by herself, she was relieved from jail duties

(16) CO 260/59, Darling to Russell, no. 10, 14 August 1841, President Brown to Darling, 4 August 1841; CO 260/75, Colebrooke to Earl Grey, no. 18, 31 May 1851, Campbell to Colebrooke, 11 January 1851.

and she was allowed food from home. In addition her one month jail sentence was quashed within a week.(17)

Children also often became inmates in the prison. Since there were no separate facilities for young offenders, boys were locked up in the same cells as men. The children of women prisoners were also kept in the prison and were employed in sweeping the yard or were under the protection of the matron while their mothers performed hard labour. The increased poverty of the lower classes in both urban and rural areas in the 1860s resulted in an increase in the number of prisoners. Lieutenant-Governor Musgrave suggested that this was mainly because people could no longer afford to pay fines; accordingly, they opted for prison sentences to save the fine and keep themselves fed.(18)

By the end of the 1860s, the humanitarian zeal of the Colonial Office had abated, and St. Vincent was ordered to re-introduce the treadmill as a means of deterring crime. It was installed in the Kingstown jail in 1871. Coupled with the use of flogging, British officials revealed their inability to maintain prison discipline without physical torture. As Holt reported for Jamaica at the turn of the century, it was the racist ideology of the Colonial authorities that perpetuated barbaric forms of prison punishment. Prison regulations aimed merely to regulate rather than abolish the use of torture within the jails of

(17) CO 260/117, Rawson to Kimberley, no. 75, 21 November 1972, Report of cropping women's hair from other British Colonies; St. Vincent Guardian and Government Gazette, 22 April and 29 April 1865.

(18) CO 260/103, Mundy to Cardwell, no. 311, 15 May 1865, Lieutenant-Governor's report accompanying the Blue Book;

Jamaica. This opinion echoes the editorial comments in The Witness. The editor, William Stowe a coloured man, questioned the validity of spending £900 on a treadmill, rather than using the money to prevent crimes. He cited a case of a boy of seven years, who was sentenced to hard labour and was working in the same gang as hardened adult male prisoners.⁽¹⁹⁾

The hospital was established in 1841 to cater for the old and disabled, both as resident patients and out patients. Those with infectious diseases, however, were not admitted until 1861, and the mentally ill were left to roam the streets or were sent to the jail. According to Charles Day, the streets of Kingstown were full of people he described as 'crazy negroes', 'daftbodies' and 'naturals'. Much of the original cost of the hospital was raised by the affluent women of the island. They held bazaars, craft shows and parties to fund the hospital. Contributions were also made by friendly societies and religious congregations, and a crowd of 4000 watched the laying of the first corner stone. However, a severe lack of funds limited the work of the hospital and, in 1849, the hospital announced that it could no longer take in any new patients or feed any out patients for the rest of the year. In 1855, the hospital was again closed for over nine months due to debts, and it was periodically closed throughout the rest of the decade. It was eventually rebuilt in the 1870s.⁽²⁰⁾

⁽¹⁹⁾ CO 260/115, Rawson to Kimberley, no. 94, 13 November 1871, Rennie to Rawson, 5 October 1871; Holt, The Problem of Freedom pp. 286, 340; The Witness, 3 August, 1871.

The states of these two institutions reveal the apathy and lack of compassion for the freed slaves within the Legislature. As the hospital catered for mainly black and coloured patients, it was voted minimal funding. Public health care was neglected because of an unwillingness to assist the labouring class. One doctor, when he was questioned on the lack of vaccinations against small pox among the poor, claimed the neglect was due to class hatred. He wrote that he blamed 'class prejudices among the different races as one of the chief causes of preventing a sufficient supply of Lymph'. Homelessness was also common, and there were no public facilities for orphaned or abandoned children. This was not unique to St. Vincent. Bridget Brereton discovered a similar apathy concerning destitute children in Trinidad in the late nineteenth century. The lack of sanitation in the prison was only a matter of concern when white people were affected, and the indignities forced on women prisoners were considered unsuitable for 'the respectable' Miss Brisbane. The Assembly was frequently called on by Lieutenant-Governors to introduce more provisions for the poor, but local legislators claimed that lack of funding made this impossible.(21)

(20) Day, Five Years Residence vol. 1 p. 157, vol.2, p. 112; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 20 February 1841; 17 September 1842; 6 January 1849; CO 260/83, Colebrooke to Russell, no. 43, 7 August 1855, Lieutenant-Governor Eyre's reforms for the local establishments.

(21) CO 260/114, Rawson to Kimberley, no. 67, 14 August 1871, Sandford to Laborde, 9 August 1871; Bridget Brereton, Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad, 1870-1900 (Cambridge, 1979), p. 122; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 23 October 1847, CO 260/78, Hamilton to Pakington, no. 5, 20

Employment.

The towns offered a wider variety of employment for freed slaves than the sugar estates. Construction work was available for both skilled and unskilled labourers within the cities on the public and private buildings. In 1845, there were about 433 tradesmen in Kingstown. Carpenters and masons could earn between twelve and eighteen shillings a week, and blacksmiths earned twenty-five to thirty shillings.(22)

There were very few openings for middle-class female employment. A few fortunate women became small property speculators, using the compensation money they received after the abolition of slavery to invest in the rapidly expanding suburbs.(23) However, many of the coloured women who had relied on slave hiring for their income before abolition were reduced to poverty by the 1840s. Their fate mirrored the prediction of a woman interviewed by Thome and Kimball in 1835. 'We shall have no work to do ourselves. We shall have to beg, and who shall we beg from?' she asked, 'All will be beggars and we must starve!'.(24) By the mid-1840s, the stipendiary magistrates were expressing

February 1852, Lieutenant-Governor's Address to the House of Assembly; CO 260/79, Colebrooke to Newcastle, no. 4, 26 January 1854, Lieutenant-Governor's Address to the House of Assembly.

(22) CO 260/66, Grey to Gladstone, 20 March 1846, no. 7. Lieutenant-Governor Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book.

(23) Deeds 1831-1839.

(24) James Thome and J.Horace Kimball, Emancipation in the West Indies (1838) (rpt. New York, 1969), p. 73.

increasing concern for these women, and some actually do appeared to have starved. Others relied on food handed out by the Colonial hospital.(25)

Many of these women may have been cheated out of their compensation money by merchants as all cheques had to be drawn on English banks. Stipendiary magistrate John Colthurst claimed that merchants used rumours that the British Government was going to rescind on its promise to compensate slave owners to pressurise these women into selling their rights to compensation for a fraction of their value. Mary Butler has also found that this was the case in Jamaica and Barbados. Women with skills were able to become seamstresses. There were also a few positions in the new hospital and, in 1840, the prison employed a matron, but it was this 'respectable class' of women whom government officials considered the real paupers of the post-emancipation society.(26)

Coloured families also owned many of the small huckster and dry goods stores in the towns. These sold a variety of goods and, according to Day, were uniformly dirty and expensive. A coloured woman, Kate Flemmings, also owned one of the two boarding houses in the town and catered for young, single men.(27)

(25) CO 265/3, St. Vincent Stipendiary Magistrates' Returns, Consolidated tables for February 1846, 31 December 1848.

(26) Woodville Marshall (ed.), The Colthurst Journal: Journal of a Special Magistrate in the Islands of Barbados and St. Vincent, 1835-1838 (New York, 1977), p. 211; Kathleen Mary Butler, The Economics of Emancipation: Jamaica and Barbados, 1823-1843 (Chapel Hill, 1995), p. 39.

(27) Day, Five Years Residence vol. 1, pp. 106-107.

A major source of employment for women in the towns was domestic service. Domestic workers in St. Vincent and indeed the rest of the Caribbean were notorious for their lack of compliance and their day-to-day resistance to authority. This was one of the results of the slave system, where domestic work was a reward for favoured slaves and domestics were encouraged to see themselves as superior to the other slaves. This made many domestics unmanageable for their owners and employers. Mrs. Carmichael, a slave holder in Kingstown, was frequently and openly disobeyed by her household slaves. They took delight in defying her, and even the children were brought up to disobey. She wrote of one child that she wanted to dress in a frock running, laughing and prancing about naked. The child had torn off the dress. Carmichael was also frightened of her head domestic, a forceful and violent man. Even when he was caught forcing her daughter to drink a burning mixture of pepper and mustard, he was not punished.⁽²⁸⁾

In Bridgetown Barbados, Elizabeth Fenwick also experienced 'endless trouble and vexation' as she discovered that her domestic slaves could not be called on to do any work and their actions of defiance caused her to spend all day chasing and chastising them. Her conflicts with her domestic staff were primarily responsible for a shifting in Fenwick's attitudes to slavery and race. She had arrived in the West Indies as an opponent of slavery, but was soon

(28) A. C. Carmichael, Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Negro and Coloured Populations of the West Indies (1833) (rpt. 2 Vols. New York 1969), vol. 1, pp. 118-9, 153, 272-3, 279-280.

converted to becoming a slave owner, even sending her slaves to be whipped.(29)

Criticism of this working style continued after the abolition of slavery. Domestic workers in Anderson's experience were 'excessively indolent, equally passionate, wasteful, intriguing and indifferent to instruction. Ever ready with a retort in their Nasal Creole drawl in the way of excuse for themselves'. He claimed that 'they refuse to work with any regularity and system' and would deliberately all claim to be ill and refuse to work at the same time. Anderson's domestics probably took delight in frustrating him, as he was a man who was rigid in his approach to life, haughty and proud and with strong beliefs on the deference due to him and others of his class by 'the lower orders'. He was appalled that his servants answered back to any criticism 'in a way unknown at home, (the women curtsyng, however, and their tongues were going in incessant strife)'.(30)

Anderson was not alone in his complaints. The haughty demeanour of many domestics also enraged Day. He claimed that it was the defiance and dishonesty of many domestics that forced English residents in the West Indies to abandon their 'Exeter Hall tenderness'. Missionary William Ritchie also wrote that 'one English servant in England can and in general does more work than three or four West Indian ones in the West Indies'. Lieutenant-Governor Campbell also

(29) Hillary Beckles, Natural Rebels: a Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados (London, 1989), pp. 62-5.

(30) Anderson's Journal pp. 14, 31, 97.

complained that domestics had 'no feelings of fidelity' and would leave their employer 'upon some momentary whim'.(31)

For British men and women, the servants of the West Indies were the antithesis of those at home. In England in the nineteenth century, servants were expected to defer totally to their employers, and, in some households, this even included facing the wall or bowing when a member of the employer's family entered a room. They were frequently recruited from the poorest rural families as very young girls and had very limited opportunities outside of domestic work. As a result, they were exploited, made to perform demeaning and arduous tasks and paid pitifully low wages. Of course, many servants in England did not fulfil their employers' requirements, and the wealthy in England frequently complained about their servants. However, in the Caribbean, European residents found their servants to be far less controllable.(32)

Compared to agricultural labourers, domestics were well paid in St. Vincent. During apprenticeship, the head servant, who was often a man, earned between £1 14s 8d to £2 3s 4d per month and a cook and washerwoman earned between £1 1s 8d to £1 6s. The lower servants earned 4s 2d per week. In the larger households, work was organised so that each person had only one allotted task; hence a washerwoman would

(31) Day, Five Years Residence vol. 2, p. 110; WMMS, Box 141, no. 72, 14 May 1844, William Ritchie to General Secretaries; CO 260/66, Grey to Gladstone, no. 7, 20 March 1846, Lieutenant-Governor Campbell's report accompanying the Blue Book.

(32) Leonore Davidoff, Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives of Gender and Class (Cambridge, 1995), p. 112.

only wash clothes and a housemaid would not work in the cook house. Their refusal to do work other than their allotted task ensured that the skilled domestics, the cooks, head servants and laundresses retained their superior status.⁽³³⁾ Advertisements in the newspapers also indicate the different roles that servants undertook. One advertisement placed by 'a Lady' requested three servants, one to cook and keep house, a lady's maid and seamstress, and a man to clean the furniture and yard. This advert stated 'these people must be of unexceptionable character particularly the females; they must be civil and obliging, industrious and attentive, honest and sober.' This advertisement was run for over a month, which would suggest that there was a shortage of skilled domestic servants at this time.⁽³⁴⁾

Not all domestics in St. Vincent had easy lives. While European writers were quick to complain about their workers, they frequently ignored the abuses committed against servants. Because of the proximity of domestic workers and employers and the intimate nature of their work, domestic workers, and especially women, were open to abuse. During apprenticeship, this abuse was occasionally recorded by magistrates and abolitionists and included brutal beatings, refusal to pay wages or food and sexual exploitation.⁽³⁵⁾ After full freedom, there was no protection available to

⁽³³⁾ Anderson's Journal pp. 13, 31.

⁽³⁴⁾ St Vincent Chronicle and Public Gazette, 7 January 1840.

⁽³⁵⁾ Marshall (ed.), Colthurst's Journal pp. 54-55, 90-91, 122-123.

domestic workers, so there are few records showing whether abuse persisted.

One case, however, reveals that the physical abuse of young servants was commonplace. In 1856, there was a murder trial after a woman killed a young maid. The details of the trial were reported in the Colonial Office reports because the defendant in the case was found guilty and originally sentenced to death. The trial notes reveal a great deal of information on the lives of the victim and other domestics as well as the attitudes of the defendant and her friends.

The victim was a young girl of around twelve called Polly. She had been orphaned during the cholera epidemic and was found in a dirty and confused state by a seamstress called Mary Ann Horne. Horne took her into her home, cleaned her up and kept her as a servant, giving her the nickname Old Age. When the defendant, Maria Durham, who was also a seamstress, lived with Horne, it was common for the two women to whip Polly, holding her with her clothes and beating her with a leather strap when they were dissatisfied with her. Horne admitted this in court, despite the illegality of the act. On the day of Polly's death, Durham was informed that Polly was spreading lies about her. Caroline Brown, a friend of Durham's, informed the court that Durham told her that she was planning to find Polly and 'flog the child and break her neck'. Brown agreed with this action, claiming that Polly was ungrateful. Durham eventually found Polly in the street and dragged her to the beach where she pulled up Polly's dress and severely beat her, leaving her lying on the beach. Several men witnessed

the beating, but did not intervene. Polly's unconscious body was washed into the sea and she drowned.

What this tragic case reveals is the acceptance of physical punishment inflicted on servants. Durham, Horne, Brown and the men who saw Polly beaten all believed that beating the child was justified and acceptable. The case also revealed, through the testimony of another witness, that some servants were neglected in other ways. Polly's friend, Frances, who was also a servant in Horne's household, spent the night when Polly died sleeping in the streets because Horne refused to allow her into her house. It is clear that these young girls suffered routine abuse and neglect as part of their domestic service. Michele Johnson has also described how, during periods of financial depression in the twentieth century, domestics in the Caribbean were subject to a great deal of hardship.⁽³⁶⁾

Perhaps because of the lack of independence and privacy afforded to domestics, many women chose to be self-employed as hucksters. In 1844, it was estimated that there were between 150 and 160 hucksters in the island. These traders were crucial to the internal market economy, carrying a wide variety of dry goods and imported luxuries to the estates which they usually sold for cash or exchanged for fresh produce. They were also important in the dissemination of news and may have been responsible for the frequent spread of rumours. Hucksters travelled many miles each day, either

(36) CO 260/85, Hincks to Labouchere, no. 12, 24 March 1856, Trial of Maria Durham; Michele Johnson, 'Intimate Enmity: Control and Women in Domestic Service in Jamaica, 1920-1970', Jamaican Historical Review, Vol XVIII (1993), pp. 55-64.

carrying their goods in bundles on their heads or loaded on a donkey or mule. They were skilled in currency conversions, swapping between current money, Spanish dollars and sterling and the fractions of the coins that their smaller transactions warranted.⁽³⁷⁾

This independent spirit was seen as suspicious by the planter class and many of the magistrates. After emancipation, the Assembly attempted to restrict the trade by requiring that all hucksters buy licences. As with other attempts made during slavery, this was largely unsuccessful. In 1843, only sixty-six people had taken out licences, and the following year the number had fallen to thirty-two. The newspaper listed all the people who had not renewed their licences in an attempt to discourage people from buying from illegal traders. In many ways the authorities were hampered in their attempts to curtail the hucksters. Not only were they fiercely independent people, but their movements also allowed them to trade away from observation by the police, and their value to both labourers and estate managers by bringing goods onto the estates ensured that they continued to be patronised. In the early 1870s, the Government began to realise the importance of the internal market trade to the well being of the colony. A shelter was erected in the market to provide shade and protection from rain, and in 1875, Lieutenant-Governor Dundas decided to abolish the tax on hucksters' licences to assist 'a class whom it is most desirable to encourage'. This shift in attitude towards

(37) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 15 June 1844; Thome and Kimball, Emancipation in the West Indies p. 103; Day, Five Years Residence vol. 2, p. 108.

hawkers was part of the growing realisation that the sugar plantations could not alone sustain the population and that the economy needed diversity. It was also as a result of the growth of the urban population, which required a cheap and plentiful supply of locally-produced food.(38)

Women dominated the internal market system. While both men and women took produce from their provision grounds to the town markets, there were only two men listed as hucksters in 1844. In her research into women and development, Esther Boserup revealed that women frequently work as traders when they have no legal rights for support from their children's fathers. Women hucksters in St. Vincent asserted their energy, strength and independence by choosing a profession that took them on long and difficult journeys through isolated areas of the island. Their work gave them financial control over their lives as well as the chance to associate with old friends and family members when they visited estates where they had once worked. Other women took part in the lucrative inter-island economy, sending their produce to the French islands as well as other British islands. Today, this innovation can still be seen in the market women who take their foods from St. Vincent to other islands in the Caribbean.(39)

(38) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 15 June 1844; CO 260/118, Rawson to Kimberley, no. 16, 3 May 1873, Laborde to Rawson, 16 April 1873: CO 321/7, Rawson to Carnarvon, no. 32, 4 May 1875, The Witness, 15 July 1875.

(39) Esther Boserup, The Role of Women in Economic Development (New York, 1970), pp. 91-92.

Entertainment.

Kingstown offered its inhabitants a variety of amusements. The entertainments of wealthier inhabitants were recorded and advertised in the newspapers. As well as balls and assemblies, there was also a wide range of entertainers and speakers who gave lectures on diverse subjects. There were also horse races and regattas which were concluded with a dance, as were the arrivals and departures of military units. Amateur and professional drama groups also performed several times each year. There were also maroon parties, when residents from the town visited local beauty spots for a picnic. It is probable that many of these events, especially those held in private homes, were racially segregated. Day suggested that Europeans did not offer coloured families the same level of hospitality offered to whites. In Antigua, also, Mrs Lanaghan, a resident in the 1840s, claimed that white women and coloured women did not mix socially. This she explained was due to illegitimacy rather than colour.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Wealthy white residents were very proud of the entertainment offered to the elite, as this was seen as an indication of the civility of their society and their continual self improvement. Newspaper reporters gave fulsome praise to local events and the efforts of the

(40) For advertisements of social events, see for example The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 12 February 1842, 24 December 1842; Day, Five Years Residence vol. 1, pp. 82-83, 2, pp. 115-116; Susan Lowes, '"They Couldn't Mash Ants": The Decline of the White and Non-white Elites in Antigua, 1834-1900', in Karen Fog Olwig (ed.), Small Islands, Large Questions: Society, Culture and Resistance in the Post-Emancipation Caribbean (London, 1995), pp. 41-42.

participants. In The Royal St. Vincent Gazette, a reader calling himself 'Gumble Gumption' boasted of the wide range of social events on offer to the residents of St. Vincent comparing it favourably to life in Britain. Vincentians were aware of how they were viewed by metropolitan society. Travellers to the West Indies were quick to criticise white creoles for their lack of style and education. The officials from the Colonial Office were also scathing about the lack of expertise and accomplishment of local officials.⁽⁴¹⁾

Richard Burton has suggested that entertainment within the Caribbean gives participants a sense of individual and collective identity and helps form political consciousness. In St. Vincent, the entertainment enjoyed by the poor was often organised in the face of official opposition, although many of the dances put on by domestic and skilled workers mirrored the entertainments of the rich. For example, during the apprenticeship period, Anderson opposed the parties of the apprentices in Kingstown for two main reasons. Firstly, they were often supplied with clothing, wine and food purloined from the apprentices' employers. His second criticism was a reflection of his narrow view of class and behaviour. The dances organised in Kingstown involved rituals of gallantry and manners which Anderson did

(41) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 30 July 1842; for British attitudes to West Indians, see for example Day, Five Years Residence vol. 1, p. 81, vol. 2, p. 124; Lieutenant-Governor Eyre, in an assessment of the members of the House of Assembly, claimed 'the men of the Assembly are not only not men of talent, but are greatly deficient even in ordinary education and knowledge', CO 260/82, Colebrooke to Russell, 19 May 1855, Confidential. Eyre to Colebrooke, 2 May 1855.

not find appropriate for domestic apprentices. After one dance which resulted in a fight, one apprentice stated that the fight had started when another man had attempted to cut in on him during a dance. The apprentice was even wearing his employer's sword. To punish and humiliate him, Anderson ordered 'the tonsure to his woolly head and a Dance to other movements in the Cage'. In other words, Anderson sentenced him to have his head shaved and to work the treadmill.(42)

At another dance, the participants were found wearing new shoes and stockings, and one woman, the organiser of the ball, was dressed in 'a white Satin gown, trimmed with white and corresponding finery'. At this ball, the police found a dozen and a half empty champagne bottles as well as spirits and a table spread with food served on an employer's silver plates. This dance was a regular event, and the attendants were issued with cards and invitations. Only 'young ladies' were invited rather than married women. These dances reveal a world of fantasy and escapism created by the domestics of Kingstown. During their working lives, they were reminded of their inferior social and legal positions and expected to carry out demeaning tasks, but in their private lives, they dressed in borrowed finery and ate and drank the best in food and wine. The dances enabled them to act in clearly defined gender roles, stressing the femininity of the 'young ladies' and the gallantry of the sword-carrying men. Their dances were Quadrilles, with elaborate slow movements and choreographed displays of chivalry, and the dances included

(42) Richard D.E. Burton, Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition and Play in the Caribbean (Ithaca, 1997), p. 45; Anderson's Journal p. 48.

a degree of hierarchy, with host, hostess and stewards, and the guests could attend by invitation only.(43)

Dress was an important part of these social events, and women in particular used these occasions to show off their best clothes. The clothes that women wore during these dances were particularly subjected to censure. The white inhabitants of Kingstown expressed contrasting and contradictory expectations of gendered behaviour. Town women were particular targets of complaint. They were criticised for both adopting and rejecting feminine postures. Colthurst, for example, publicly ridiculed an apprentice who bought some elegant clothes with money stolen from her employer. He wrote: 'She had bought wearing apparel fine enough for a Princess. ... Their colours vied with those of the rainbow, first a flaming bright yellow bonnet, flashy dresses without number, necklaces and earrings without end, rose coloured silk stockings and two pairs of pink satin shoes'. The woman was ordered to try on the shoes. 'This was done before a very crowded court who shouted when the pink satins were placed upon the hoofs of Duchess. In truth I never saw anything as unsuitable as the satins to such feet'. The language used by Colthurst clearly expresses his position. Duchess is disparaged for her choice of colours which he describes as 'flaming' and 'flashy' to emphasise their lack of refinement. He further likened her to an animal by choosing to portray her feet as 'hoofs'. His decision to humiliate her in the court and in his account of the case, further emphasises Colthurst's

(43) Anderson's Journal pp. 123-124.

disapproval of a black woman adapting European styles to suit her own tastes.(44)

Silk stockings were particularly offensive to white people when worn by black women. Their symbolism of status, wealth and luxury were not seen as suitable for poor and especially non-white women. During slavery, Mrs. Carmicheal complained that slaves saw cotton stockings as unladylike and insisted on wearing silk. She was also affronted when slave women criticised her dress and fashion sense at a local ball. Abolitionists such as Thome and Kimball and Sturge and Harvey were as unhappy at seeing Caribbean women dressed in such luxuries as were supporters of slavery.(45)

Women in the Caribbean crossed the boundaries of acceptable class behaviour in their dress. Steeve Buckridge has argued that, while African styles of dress such as the headwrap were symbols of resistance, African-Caribbean women's adoption of European styles was a form of acculturation. However, I argue that by wearing clothes that were expensive and luxurious, working-class women actually rebelled against society and the prescriptions imposed on them. Duchess, for example chose clothes that expressed her own views of her worth and status and rejected the rigid class signals that her employer and others wished to impose on her. African-Caribbean women incurred anger and resentment through choosing fashionable clothes. Mrs

(44) Marshall (ed.), Colthurst's Journal p. 121.

(45) Thome and Kimball, Emancipation in the West Indies p 8; Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey, The West Indies in 1837 (1838) (rpt. London, 1968), p. 52; Carmichael, Domestic Manners vol. 1 pp. 75, 84.

Cowie, the wife of a St. Vincent attorney, was even reported as demanding that wages should be reduced so black women could no longer afford fine clothes, and these could then be reserved exclusively for white women. belle hooks, an American writer, also found evidence that newly-freed slave women in America were mocked by southern newspapers for their fine clothes.(46)

On the other hand, women in Kingstown were also faulted for dressing in revealing and immodest clothing. Anderson referred to a 'spectacle of African skins' when he came across bare breasted laundresses washing clothes in a river in Kingstown and when describing an elderly woman who came to court half naked: 'I question if there can be on earth so perfectly hideous a spectacle, as one of these beldames exhibiting her bare and wrinkled breasts'.(47) Newspapers also complained about the 'lewd' appearance of women, their proficiency at swearing, and the constant fighting and arguing among them.(48) One paper reported that in one disturbance, 'The majority of the belligerents were women and it may therefore at once be inferred that the epithets

(46) Steeve Buckridge 'Dress as Resistance and Accomodation among Jamaican Colonized Women, 1760-1890', Paper presented to the ACH conference, Surinam, 1998. Mrs Cowie was reported as saying that 4d per day was enough to buy 'bamboo and brown', as 'no lady could get a dress but was anticipated both in materials and fashion by the negresses.' PP 1863, (509) xxxviii, p. 166; belle hooks, Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism (London, 1982), pp. 55-56.

(47) Anderson's Journal pp. 11, 21.

(48) See for example The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 29 August 1840; 10 February 1844; St Vincent Chronicle and Public Gazette, 14 May 1839.

plentifully bestowed upon each other were distinguished for their obscenity'.(49)

Only church women dressed in white with white headdresses found favour with European male observers. These women accommodated to European prescriptions and were praised for dressing in a style which was deemed suitable for both their class position and sex, as they appeared humble and modest. Thome and Kimball described Anglican Moravians 'in the simplicity and tidiness of their attire, in its uniformity and freedom from ornament' comparing them to Anglicans whose 'dresses were of every colour and style, their hats were of all shapes and sizes, and filigreed with the most tawdry superfluity of ribbons'. Sturge and Harvey were also impressed by the Moravians' neat and simple dresses.(50)

In addition to formal dances, there were also street dances in Kingstown. Charles Day described, in his travel account of the West Indies, a 'Joe and Johnny' dance on the streets of Kingstown during the Christmas holidays. The dance was held outside and was open to everyone. Dancers paid the musicians around three pennies per dance and were then able to dance in front of the rest of the revellers. Day claimed that there were a wide variety of people attending the dance, including young black women wearing their everyday working clothes, finely dressed coloured men

(49) St Vincent Chronicle and Public Gazette, 26 November 1839.

(50) Thome and Kimball, Emancipation in the West Indies p 8; Sturge and Harvey, The West Indies in 1837 p. 18.

and women and elderly people. Day stated that young women used these dances as a way of exhibiting their sexuality through dancing skills in order to attract the men in the audience. There were seats for the participants and refreshments of cakes and lemonade. The public performances by the young women can be interpreted an example of female displays of 'reputation'.⁽⁵¹⁾

In Kingstown, masquerading was a popular form of entertainment for the poor. Masked dances were staged at crop over, Christmas, before Lent and at Easter, and the participants wore masks and 'fantastic attire' as they danced through the streets, some carrying small whips to strike passers-by. These events were not approved of by the local governing bodies who attempted to curtail the use of masquerading. Chief Justice Sharpe was particularly opposed to this form of entertainment as he believed they led to disruptions because of the large numbers involved, to 'demoralisation of the lower classes', and to 'other excesses'. His efforts to prohibit masquerading in 1850 resulted in protests from a group of people who, dressed in costumes and masks, attacked and chased Sharpe and his

(51) Day, Five Years Residence vol. 1, pp. 46-50.

'Reputation' has been described by Peter Wilson as a masculine value system associated with the 'outside world' of street life which contrasts with the female world of 'respectability' and the home. Burton has argued with Jean Besson that women as well as men aspire to attain 'reputation' and value in their street life as well as 'respectability' at home. See Peter Wilson, Crab Antics: The Social Anthropology of English-Speaking Negro Societies of the Caribbean (New Haven, 1973); Burton, Afro-Creole p. 160-166; Jean Besson, 'Reputation and Respectability Reconsidered: A New Perspective on Afro-Caribbean Women', in Janet Momsen (ed.), Women and Change in the Caribbean (London, 1993), pp. 17, 19.

daughters one evening.⁽⁵²⁾ Many other Europeans shared Sharpe's distaste for masked dances. Because the dances were not European in origin and were an example of the individual and self-created culture of the ex-slaves, they threatened the Europeans both in terms of potential physical disturbances and also as expressions of sensuality.

Masquerading was also performed by African immigrants as a means of entertaining and earning money. Day described a dance performed by a 'Jumpsa' man, who was an Ebo. The dancer wore six feet high stilts, brightly coloured striped trousers, a scarlet mask made of cloth and decorated with shells, and, on his head, he wore a wig and a Grenadine's hat. The dancer was accompanied by drummers and assistants from a corps of African soldiers who were stationed on the island. He first danced and then performed 'magic' tricks by making a large stick appear to jump out of his assistants' hands. At the end of the performance, the Jumpsa man collected pennies from the crowd and, according to Day, offered his services as an Obeah-man.⁽⁵³⁾

In 1872, wearing masks was declared an offence under the Petty Offences Act, following confrontations between police and masqueraders during the 1871 Christmas celebrations. The Witness newspaper reported these scenes as being an example of the double standards of the island. Whites had been allowed to parade through the streets behind a marching band, but the poor were denied the right to

(52) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 11 May 1850.

(53) Day, Five Years Residence vol. 1, pp. 85-86.

pursue a similar form of entertainment. In 1879, some of the participants in the pre-Lent carnival wore masks on the first day of the festivities. Acting-Administrator Edward Laborde, who was also an Anglican rector, ordered the police to ensure that no masks were worn the following day. A group of revellers petitioned Laborde, requesting to be allowed to carry on with the traditional masquerade. Laborde refused, stating that masqueraders used their disguises to insult and threaten people, frighten horses and encourage large 'mobs of idle followers'. Despite Laborde's orders, masqueraders danced in the streets that night and when police attempted to arrest them, large crowds surrounded the police and attacked them with sticks and stones. The crowd was also able to catch the chief of police, Gerrit Van Heyningan, and beat him. In spite of the increased police presence the next day, masquerading continued and the crowd also attacked Laborde's carriage with stones. However, the town returned to normal when the festivities ended.(54)

Throughout the Caribbean similar scenes occurred at different times when Governments attempted to quell masquerading. In Jamaica, riots occurred in Kingstown in 1842 when police arrested some musicians who were celebrating in the Christmas masquerades. In Trinidad, also, there were several attempts to end carnival

(54) The Witness, 22 December 1871; CO 321/30, Dundas to Hicks Beach, no. 20, 22 February, 1879, Laborde to Dundas, 15 February 1879. The Witness ran a three part poem mocking the efforts of Van Heyningan to quell the rioters. Parts one and three can be seen in The Witness, 27 February and 13 March 1879 at the British Library, Colindale. For more details on Van Heyningan, see chapters 9 and 10.

celebrations. However, the importance of the festival to local people ensured they endured. Masquerading and the other street dances relieved the population from the tedium and poverty of every-day life. The acts of defiance that revellers committed when they chased Sharpe and his family and attacked Van Heyningan and Laborde revealed the determination of the poor to retain their culture and traditions. Masquerading gave people a safe and anonymous platform on which to express their dissatisfaction and frustration. They used whips and costumes to symbolise and mock the local authorities as well as to celebrate the survival of their traditions and heritage.(51)

Conclusion.

The institutions in Kingstown reveal the continued strength of racism, as few mechanisms were in place to protect and provide for the poorest members of society. The predominantly European members of the Legislature were reluctant to spend revenue on institutions that would primarily benefit African-Caribbean residents. Furthermore, the police and prison officers, recruited largely from the European and coloured communities, exhibited a callous indifference towards the blacks within the jails. Discipline within the prison walls was maintained with force

(55) Brereton, Race Relations p. 156-157; David Trotman, Crime in Trinidad: Conflict and Control in a Plantation Society, 1838-1900 (Knoxville, 1986), pp. 263-268; Mimi Sheller, 'Peasants and Politics in Post-Emancipation Haiti and Jamaica', Paper presented to the Society of Caribbean Studies Conference Hull, July 1996, p. 10.

and brutality with the intention of curtailing crime through fear rather than education.

Poverty was an overriding problem. House prices were far higher than in rural areas, and few residents in Kingstown actually owned their own home or even had tenancy rights. The majority were tenants-at-will, who were cramped into small overcrowded huts and faced exposure to infectious diseases and other health hazards. Many workers in the city were frequently unemployed and lowly paid. Homelessness, alcohol abuse, prostitution and petty crime prevailed, and little was done by the authorities to improve the town's physical and social problems. The hospital, prison, police force and education institutions remained badly funded and inadequate.

However, life in the towns also offered people a variety of work opportunities and entertainments. In addition, it also offered people an anonymity and a release from supervision. Young town dwellers had access to a far wider range of recreational activities both within the churches and among the many rum shops, at dances and during carnivals. The restricted living conditions within the yards gave rise to a street life which also had a degree of spontaneity and unpredictability. Town dwellers exhibited self-assurance and, despite the strength of class differences, they were frequently able to unite to protect their rights and express their grievances.

Roger Chartier claimed that 'social differences cannot be conceptualised solely in terms of wealth or dignity, but are either produced by or expressed in cultural

differences'.⁽⁵⁶⁾ It was through entertainment that the inhabitants of Kingstown most expressed their social diversity. Those who belonged to the 'elite' enjoyed 'respectable' forms of entertainment, connected to the Anglican Church or limited to a select few families sharing similar class and colour backgrounds. The maroon parties that Day attended, and the balls organised by elite families and the governing officials were exclusive and the only forms of entertainment open to women of the upper class. The formal ticket parties described by Anderson combined the dress and dance styles of the elite without the rigid codes of sexual conduct. Among the poor, entertainment also incorporated African-Creole traditions and styles and took place in the open air. Street dances and masquerading enabled the poor to control the streets and, for a short while, intimidate and mock the authorities. Women were able to take part as both active participants, displaying their dancing skills, and within the audience. These events helped to alleviate the stresses of low wages, hard work and poor housing.

(56) Roger Chartier, Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations, Translated by Lydia Cochrane (Cambridge, 1988), p. 31.

Chapter Nine.

Colour, Class and Protests among Urban Residents.

Most major disturbances in the post-emancipation period involved rural workers and their struggle for better working and housing conditions. In the towns, the wide variety of work and employers meant that labour strikes were usually impractical.⁽¹⁾ However, issues of class and race were often at the centre of disputes. In St. Vincent, town dwellers were quick to react against discrimination faced in the courts and government offices. Protests in Kingstown were both orchestrated and spontaneous. In addition, protesters used both legal and illegal means to effect change. The growth in the town's population, coupled with the withdrawal of troops in 1854, gave black and coloured urban dwellers the confidence and opportunities to overturn governmental decisions.

In his work on nineteenth-century rioters, Eric Hobsbawm suggested that town rioters had very different goals from rural protesters. He argued that they were 'pre-political', and 'as yet inspired by no specific ideology'. Rioters, often referred to as the 'mob', usually manifested three ideals: firstly, they demanded to be heard and wanted some concessions from the authorities; secondly, their activities were against the rich and powerful, but not the

(1) Exceptions to this included the strikes organised by stevedores and droughers in Antigua and Kingstown in 1858. See, CO 7/109, Hamilton to Stanley, no. 21, 27 March 1858; CO 260/91, Hinks to Stanley, no. 30, 15 June 1858.

head of state; thirdly, they exhibited animosity towards outsiders. Hobsbawm further suggested that town rioters frequently had short term goals and did not seek to seize power or radically change society. This chapter will investigate a variety of protests undertaken by town residents, which were in response to discrimination based on colour within the judiciary and administration of the colony and assess how applicable Hobsbawm's theories are to the Caribbean.(2)

Colour and Class.

Unruly behaviour was not uncommon in Kingstown after emancipation in 1834. Local disturbances, which involved families or neighbours reacting violently during disputes, annoyed and frightened wealthy residents because they were no longer able to control the labouring classes through physical force. Between 1839 and 1840, there were a series of drunken fights reported in the local newspapers, including one when a man was killed after a fight broke out at a dance. Town dwellers, often referring to themselves as 'the respectable' drew up petitions to encourage better policing and also suggested demolishing the homes of the poorer sections of the community. However, common street fights between neighbours and rivals, often a result of overcrowded living conditions and drunkenness, rarely

(2) E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Manchester, 1959), pp. 109-121.

threatened the lives and property of the well-off and had personal rather than political causes.(3)

Political tensions, nevertheless, were present in Kingstown. Class divisions were drawn along racial as well as economic lines. Since there were few residential proprietors in St. Vincent, the European 'elite' included men who worked as merchants, attorneys, lawyers, and high ranking civil servants. They held positions in the House of Assembly and Executive Council and formed the judiciary. The women of the elite were usually involved in charity work. One Governor-General divided whites into those who belonged to 'society' and those that did not. Whites that were excluded from society included Madeiran immigrants, tradespeople, police officers and junior civil servants.(4) 'Elite' coloured families had similar incomes and employment of wealthy whites, although the men did not achieve the higher governmental positions, and some of the richer coloured women earned their own incomes often as land speculators. Barriers against citizenship and legal rights based on race were discontinued after 1832, but legal rights did not negate the prejudices held by many Europeans. Social barriers remained which excluded coloureds from many of the more prestigious events. Thus, for example, at a

(3) For example, see The St. Vincent Chronicle and Public Gazette: 7 May 1839; 12 November 1839; 26 November 1839; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 29 August 1840.

(4) CO 260/116, Rawson to Kimberley, Confidential, 22 March 1872.

ball in the honour of a visiting prince, no coloured women were invited to dance with him.(5)

Educated black and coloured men, tradesmen, civil servants and merchants of the town formed part of what Susan Lowes has described as 'the first middle class.(6) They did not actively participate in violent protests but used other methods to seek redress. By the middle of the 1840s, many of these men had achieved positions of responsibility under the liberal governorship of George Tyler. They were therefore articulate and proud of their status, as Lieutenant-Governor Campbell discovered at the beginning of his tenure in St. Vincent. Convinced of his own superiority and insensitive to the feelings of others, Campbell, in his first report to the Colonial Office, scathingly described the 'native' craftsmen as inept and expensive. Within weeks of his report being published, tradesmen and other influential members of the coloured community held angry meetings and wrote Campbell a trenchant letter. In it the writers questioned Campbell's ability on such a short stay to accurately describe local tradespeople and accused him of prejudice.

They wrote that the short time he had spent in the island could not 'in our opinion have enabled your Excellency to become sufficiently acquainted with the

(5) CO 260/116, Rawson to Kimberly, Confidential, 22 March 1872; CO 260/95, Nesbitt to Newcastle, Separate Enclosure, 7 March 1861. I have used the term 'coloured' to refer to people of mixed African and European ancestry.

(6) Susan Lowes, 'The Peculiar Class: the Formation, Collapse and Reformation of the Middle Class in Antigua, West Indies, 1834-1940' (PhD thesis Columbia University, 1994), pp. 2, 145.

coloured and black inhabitants to form a correct estimate of their character'. In reply to Campbell's assertion that there was a wide gulf between the white and coloured classes and that few coloureds and no blacks were capable of holding positions of trust, the petitioners wrote:

'We assure your Excellency that the coloured and black classes, however deficient your Excellency may consider them to be in education and trust-worthiness, see nothing to distrust, nothing to apprehend, in reference to their position relative to the white population. Should sentiments arise they can only be called forth by such inflammable reports as those under consideration.'

The petitioners insisted that a copy of their complaint was forwarded to the Colonial Office to ensure that their opinions were recorded and that Campbell's judgement was questioned. Campbell was obviously amazed by the reaction that his comments raised and publicly apologised for his hasty and misunderstood comments.(7) This episode reveals how far apart the various classes in the town were from each other. Campbell and his staff were either unaware or unconcerned about the self-esteem of the local tradespeople and other professional black and coloured men. On the other hand, the educated men from the middle classes were determined to prove themselves. Their choice of a deputation and the wording of their letter was calculated to

(7) CO 260/67, Reid to Earl Grey, no. 12, 24 March 1847, Joshua Hazell to Campbell, 8 March 1847, Campbell to Hazell 9 March 1847, Hazell to Campbell 10 March 1847.

further disprove Campbell's report and bolster their own claims for 'equal respect and privileges'.

Their concern, however, did not extend to the females of their class. No women were involved in the petition and no mention of women was made in the letter. Coloured women were excluded from their male counterparts' demands for intellectual and professional parity. This contrasts with later disputes involving the urban poor, when women were at the forefront of spontaneous rioting, and the police frequently complained that females were the worst of the rioters.

Individuals also resorted to petitions, and one of the lengthiest and most personal was made by William Lynch against Lieutenant-Governor McDowell. When he assumed the governorship of St. Vincent, McDowell expressed his dismay at the lack of qualified and educated people in the island who were willing to assume public office. He began to reorganise some of the civil and legal appointments and, as part of this reorganisation, Lynch was denied his position as commissioner of the peace. Lynch was angered at what he perceived to be a personal insult and began a series of petitions to the Colonial Office demanding to be reinstated. Lynch claimed that he was a victim of racial prejudice, while McDowell denied this. However, McDowell's stated reasons for not reinstating Lynch were that he had once been a domestic worker and was illiterate. The Governor's dispatches concerning Lynch, however, reveal that McDowell considered Lynch to be a ridiculous figure. He mocked his letters and claimed that they were written by paid clerks.

The fact that Lynch was at the time one of the most successful merchants in the town was seen as secondary to his class and educational background. However, through determined and ambitious actions, Lynch was able to achieve a position of some authority in the island. He was an elected member of the House of the Assembly and was appointed to the Legislative Assembly just before his death in 1869. Lieutenant-Governor Berkeley referred to him as a 'a respected and staunch supporter'.⁽⁸⁾

The 'second middle class' was made up of mainly black and coloured families who were skilled artisans, shopkeepers, and clerks. Many men within this class were jurors and members of the volunteer militia force, and it was common for the women to be economically active as teachers, seamstresses, laundresses, and traders and often to have more than one source of income.⁽⁹⁾ Many of this class struggled financially, but they regarded themselves as very different from the poor. Access to property was one marker of respectability, either through ownership or tenancy, as was membership of one of the Christian denominations. In addition, the public demeanour of the inhabitants emphasised the importance they gave to the notion of respectability. Charles Day found it very uncomfortable that some of the poorest members of the town considered themselves to be his

(8) CO 260/78, Colebrooke to Newcastle, no. 32, 25 October 1853; CO 260/79, Colebrooke to Newcastle, no. 4, 11 January 1854; CO 260/111, Rawson to Granville: no. 662, 8 July 1869; no. 676, 5 August 1869.

(9) This term is also borrowed from Susan Lowes. See Lowes, 'The Peculiar Class' p. 175.

equal. He mocked their polite forms of address to each other and complained:

'There is something very funny in the idea of ladies and gentlemen who can neither read nor write, and who condescend to be hucksters or porters, washerwomen or seamstresses, yet these wretched creatures have been so spoiled by philanthropists as to believe themselves fully equal to any whites, whatever their accomplishments or social position'.

Education and literacy were of less importance to the black and coloured inhabitants than respect from those around them. Interestingly, a local newspaper accused Day of being little more than a self-important hairdresser when his book was published.(10)

Those considered to be among the 'lower orders' were primarily black and worked as sailors, porters, labourers, unskilled domestics and hucksters or were unemployed. These people did not own property but lived in huts on the outskirts of town or slept in their employers' homes or on the streets.

Street Protests.

Among the middle social groups, there evolved feelings of racial and class solidarity which were occasionally

(10) A picture of the lives of the middle-class can be seen from the trial notes of Maria Durham and the memorials of Mrs. Hill and Mary Ann and Jane Cruikshank. See CO 260/85, Hinks to Labouchere, no. 12, 24 March 1856; CO 260/96, Hinks to Newcastle, no. 61, December 1861; CO 260/102, Walker to Cardwell, no. 268, 12 September 1864; Charles Day, Five Years Residence in the West Indies (2 Vols. London, 1852), vol. 1, p. 21, vol. 2, p. 132-133; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 5 June 1852.

expressed in spontaneous and violent conflicts with the authorities. In the early years of emancipation, two disturbances occurred when the authorities attempted to impose harsh rulings against men from the middle class. Expressions of racial antagonism disturbed the white authorities, and on both occasions, rioting spread rapidly throughout the city. Several years later, in the mid-1850s, disturbances occurred which indicate that law and order within the town had been temporarily wrested from the Europeans' control. However, while many of those that took part in the rioting were members of the lower classes; the riots were not an attempt to gain equality for all: they were expressions of dissatisfaction with the openly prejudiced actions of individual law officers.

In 1838, just before the end of the apprenticeship period, John Anderson, a stipendiary and police magistrate, recorded one protest. It occurred when Kingstown police magistrates sentenced a group of young free coloured men, convicted of assaulting a police officer, to the treadmill. This instantly angered many residents in the town. In 1830, soon after the treadmill had been introduced, the authorities had attempted to sentence a free coloured man to the treadmill, but he had managed to escape the punishment by producing a doctor's certificate. No other free person had ever been sentenced to the treadmill, and people considered it to be a punishment suitable only for apprentices.⁽¹¹⁾ A large group of people gathered at the

(11) CO 260/47, Individual Reports, James Stephens to Horace Twiss, August 25, 1830.

jail house and stopped the sentences from being carried out by preventing police officers from transporting the men to the cage. Friends of the young men also petitioned Lieutenant-Governor Tyler to repeal the sentences. Tyler suggested that the magistrates overturn the punishment, but they refused. The situation was resolved when a writ of Habeas Corpus was served and the youths were freed on a legal technicality. Many members of the black and coloured communities saw this as a victory and Anderson reported that people were acclaiming that 'the Buckra was put down'. Later in the year, to Anderson's dismay, one of the young men was even offered a position as police corporal.(12)

A similar event occurred in 1841, this time involving privates in the local militia. Three men fired their guns in the air to celebrate being released from duty. They were reprimanded, but three hours later they were arrested and charged with riotous behaviour. A crowd of people gathered to complain about the arrest, and in the struggle, the police knocked down a woman protester. A rumour circulated among the crowd that the police had killed her, and people reacted violently, destroying the police station and fire engine and beating several police officers. The policeman who was suspected of killing the woman protester was almost killed and had to be rescued by the militia. Newspaper reports estimated that around 200 to 300 people took part in the demonstration, and thirty were finally convicted,

(12) University of Aberdeen, Manuscript, John Anderson's Journal, 1836-1839, pp. 126-127; see also Roderick McDonald, 'Urban Crime and Social Control in St. Vincent during the Apprenticeship', in Roderick McDonald (ed.), West Indies Accounts (Kingston, 1996), pp. 330-331.

including four women. Like the 1838 riot, this was also a protest against the double standards of the law. At the rioters' trial one man told the magistrate, 'I tell you there is plenty of law in St. Vincent and no justice. The white people have had their own way too long and done us too much and it is our turn now'.(13)

Both the 1838 and 1841 riots had similar causes. The legal authorities were much harsher to non-whites than to whites and, in both cases, townspeople objected when middle-class men were subjected to treatment usually reserved for the poorer sections of the community. However, the people actually involved in the rioting included members of the middle class and the poor. The outcomes of the disturbances were also very different. In 1838, the young men were released, and Anderson did not suggest that any action was taken against the protesters. In 1841, perhaps because of the violence of the demonstrators against property and police officers, severe sentences were handed down. Before their trial, President James Brown referred to the protesters as a 'lawless mob' and promised to have them treated in a 'summary manner'.(14)

It is interesting to note that almost identical scenes occurred in St. Lucia in 1844. A fourteen-year-old coloured youth, Louison Cherry, was convicted of perjury and sentenced to one month in jail and a public flogging.

Louison was reportedly 'connected to the higher class of

(13) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 29 May 1841; 10 July 1841; 17 July 1841; 24 July 1841.

(14) St. Vincent Archives, Dispatches, 910002 3/3, Brown to MacGregor, no. 103, 28 May 1841.

coloureds' and his friends and family petitioned the Lieutenant-Governor, Arthur Torrens, to have the corporal punishment repealed. Torrens refused, but when law officers made preparations for the flogging, a large crowd assembled on the streets armed with sticks and cutlasses. Since the crowd was 'very excited', Torrens postponed the flogging and requested that the crowd disperse. However, rioting continued during the day. Meanwhile, Torrens also arranged for the boy to be medically examined, as Louison's friends claimed he was not strong enough to survive flagellation. Eventually, Louison was pronounced too weak to be flogged and so this part of his sentence was repealed. Torrens admitted to his superior, Governor-General Grey, that it would have been impossible to administer the corporal punishment, and therefore he had decided to never again sanction this form of discipline.

In the aftermath of the protest, police arrested thirty-six people and shot one man who was attempting to escape. In St. Lucia, as in St. Vincent, town dwellers had grouped together to protect a member of the coloured middle class from humiliation and harsh punishment. However, those who were arrested were from the lower classes and, according to Torrens, did not generate any sympathy from other town residents. These protests certainly conformed to some elements of Hobsbawm's theories of primitive rebels. Their main goals were short term: namely to release the arrested men. In addition, the protestors appealed peacefully to the Lieutenant-Governors while protesting violently against the police and magistrates. However, it is difficult to

consider them all as 'pre-political'. While many of the rioters were reacting purely against the specific judgements, the statements quoted by the newspaper in 1842 concerning racial equality indicate that, among 'the mob', there were some who were developing an ideology with long-term demands.(15)

Town Protests during Eyre's Administration.

In 1855, after Lieutenant-Governor John Eyre had arrived in St. Vincent, another city riot occurred, again as a result of a harsh legal judgement. This riot was the start of a series of confrontations between the local population and the police and magistrates, and the police eventually appeared to lose control over the city. The first of the riots was sparked off by the trial and conviction of a coloured woman for stealing a few canes from Sion Hill, an estate close to Kingstown. The woman, Magdalena Grant, received a sentence of two months hard labour. The case attracted the attention of a large crowd because Grant was a respectable member of the community, yet she was being tried for a crime usually reserved for labourers. A large number of those present during her trial reacted angrily to the sentence. They attacked the complainant, Robert Chapman, and also Bristol Lucas, who was

(15) CO 253/81, Grey to Stanley: no. 57, 24 October 1844; no. 62, 22 November 1844; Woodville Marshall, 'The Social and Economic Development of the Windward Islands, 1838-1865' (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1964), p. 519; Michael Louis, '"An Equal Right to the Soil": The Rise of a Peasantry in St. Lucia, 1838-1900' (PhD Thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1981), pp. 81-82; Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels pp. 109-110.

Chapman's estate constable, when they attempted to leave and drove them back into the court house. The two men could not leave the court house until ten o'clock at night, when the police were finally able to disperse the crowd.

The following Saturday, when Chapman brought similar cases to court, crowds of people gathered at the court house and 'were so great and tumultuous that the court could not go on'. Eyre arrived and told the crowd that if they had any complaints he would hear them at an appropriate time, but they must be quiet in court. This had little effect, and the police eventually had to clear the court. Women pelted Chapman with stones, and he only managed to disperse his attackers by drawing a loaded pistol. Lucas was not so lucky; he was severely beaten. As a result of the riot, Chapman decided not to carry on with his prosecutions. He complained that both in Sion Hill and in Union, another estate that he managed, he would no longer be able to call in the police to protect him against theft because so many people had witnessed his defeat.

According to police reports, the chief rioters were women. One woman led the stone-throwing attack on Chapman and when police arrested her, she was freed by an angry group of women and children. Magdalena Grant, however, chose an alternative and very effective way to protest her sentence. She became so upset and hysterical that she was allowed to go to her brother's home to recuperate from the shock. Her brother petitioned Eyre to revoke her sentence, but Eyre stated that he would only consider this if Grant surrendered to the police. Her response was to send a

doctor's certificate stating that she was too unwell.

Grant, despite being an independent small holder capable of carrying two bundles of canes single-handedly, maintained an air of feebleness to bolster her cause. Her conviction was later quashed.

What made this protest significant for later developments was that it revealed the solidarity of the coloured inhabitants of the city. The Privy Council attempted to organise a volunteer force of special constables from the 'respectable' males in the island to allow Chapman to carry on with his prosecutions, but few coloured men agreed to sign up. Three of the town's most influential residents, Gerritt Van Heyningan, John Loving Hazell and John Audain all openly refused to join. Hazell was even reported as saying that if Grant were taken to jail, there would be a rebellion and he would join it. These men were all important within the local government and they had all served as special justices or members of the Assembly. During the protest, they complained against the magistrate, James Crosby, who had sentenced Grant. Crosby, in his defence, claimed that Grant received the common sentence for praedial larceny that was usually handed out to people of 'a more humble station'. However, the people of Kingstown did not believe that Grant should receive the same punishment as an estate labourer. As Governor Hinks wrote the following year: 'the friends of a young woman of a similar class in England would react in the same way if she were sentenced to hard labour among felons and prostitutes'.

Lieutenant-Governor Eyre's reactions were also interesting. He was angry that the law had been 'suspended' and 'set in defiance' when Chapman was unable to proceed with further prosecutions, and police could not arrest or prosecute the rioters. However, he especially criticised the reactions of men like Van Heyningan and Hazell. Eyre claimed that he could not call on the support of some of his most respected residents because 'the larger portion of the coloured population, (and that too including the more respectable as well as the lower classes) were resolutely bonded together for the purpose of preventing the awards of the law from being carried out.' He requested that the Governor-General send British troops from Barbados to 'keep within its proper bounds that innate conviction of their own power, that is so often apt to mislead a population such as that of St. Vincent'. He further wrote that coloured people could not be relied on to offer any protection to life and property on the island as they would always take a 'Party' view in all local disputes.

'It is questionable how far a militia consisting almost entirely of coloured persons would offer any reliable force for the Executive to fall back on in the event of any internal disturbance arising'.

Governor-General Colebrooke refused to send troops and sent instead a police sergeant and four policemen. He also warned Eyre of the dangers of seeing a small local skirmish as an attempted rebellion, and he remarked on the folly of

prosecuting people for trifling thefts at a time when it was common for people to steal a few canes.(16)

The following year, almost identical scenes occurred. Police Magistrate James Crosby was again at the centre of the disturbances. A large crowd of people assembled at his court to observe two hearings. In the first case, Crosby sentenced a mariner to one month hard labour for swearing at a member of the treasury. The crowd of between 250 to 300 men and women rescued the mariner and put him on a boat and sent him out of police reach. They then returned to the court house to listen to the second case. This concerned the disputed ownership of a sheep. Crosby confiscated the sheep after he had failed to discover its rightful owner. In protest, the crowd forcibly took the sheep away from the police. Crosby claimed that many in the crowd were friends of the defendant in the case involving the sheep and had been noisy and disruptive during the hearing, making it impossible for him to complete his judgement.

It would appear that the crowd were determined to undermine any decision made by Crosby which went against their wishes. The police named eighteen people as the worst offenders in the confrontation. Of these, five were women, and, typically, one officer claimed that the women were 'the worse conducted'. None of those named were later arrested, and there were indications that the police had become fearful of the population. For example, one constable related an incident in which he heard a woman swearing. He

(16) CO 260/84, Colebrooke to Sir G. Grey: no. 66, 10 December 1855; no. 67, 19 December 1855; CO 260/88, Hinks to Labouchere, no. 72, 11 December 1856.

reprimanded her and she immediately called for a hatchet to chop him in two. He ran away. The woman was later arrested, but due to faulty paper work, was released and given compensation for wrongful arrest.

Correspondence between Eyre and Governor-General Hinks revealed Eyre's fears. Eyre once more requested that troops be stationed at St. Vincent as 'men again proved their power to set the law in defiance'. He claimed that life and property could not be considered secure and that the police were not equal to deal with the 'wild and savage mobs which so readily collect in a West Indian colony'. He further stated that he found his inability to prosecute any of the rioters as 'very humiliating'.

After this event, Eyre suspended Crosby and ordered an enquiry to establish why the Police Magistrate had lost the confidence of both the elite and the lower class. Two members of the enquiry were coloured. They listed several judgements made by Crosby which indicated that he was sometimes inconsistent or vindictive. As a result, he was promoted and transferred to British Guiana.(17)

In 1857, while Eyre was on leave in Britain, James Walker was sent to St. Vincent as temporary Governor. Walker stated that he was originally very concerned about the state of the police force in the island and its lack of control over the local population. In May, about 150 people released a prisoner from police custody. Walker immediately called a meeting of the 'respectable in the community' and

(17) CO 260/87, Hinks to Labouchere: no. 67, 1 November 1856; no. 70, 10 November 1856; CO 260/88, Hinks to Labouchere, no. 72, 11 December 1856.

asked for their support. Among those attending was Gerritt Van Heyningan. On his way home, Van Heyningan saw the same crowd attempting to free another man from police custody. Van Heyningan assisted the police and the man, believed to be one of the ringleaders of the crowd, was put into custody. Van Heyningan then recruited around eighty other 'respectable' men. They were sworn in as special constables and ensured that the prisoner was prosecuted. Walker claimed that he was confident that 'mob rule was abating'.(18)

It is not clear why the respectable class decided to side with the police in 1857. It may have been purely a reaction to personalities. Eyre and Crosby had both left the island, and Walker's appeal to the elite may have been more compelling than Eyre's previous attempts to enlist their support. Class interests may also have played a part in their decision to side with the police. Grant was not a member of a lower class, and the mariner received a heavy sentence merely for insulting a white man. Therefore, in both these cases, racial prejudice appeared to cloud Crosby's judgement. However, in 1857, the crowd was attempting to release a man who had been accused of assaulting a woman. The 'respectable' possibly felt no allegiance to this man and therefore decided to restore order to the town.

In 1858, when he had returned to St. Vincent, Eyre repeated his request for white troops. There had been a

(18) CO 260/89, Hinks to Labouchere: no. 53, 27 May 1857; no. 57, 22 June 1857.

serious riot in Antigua over the employment of stevedores from Barbuda and, in St. Vincent, some sailors and droughers were on strike. There were also reports that one of the Antiguan ringleaders was among the strikers encouraging them to fight the authorities. Eyre wanted a Man-of-War to call regularly to quell unrest.(19) While no violence ensued from the strike, ironically, there was a serious disturbance later that year due to the actions of white sailors from the Man-of-War HMS Jasper.

The sailors behaved so badly while on shore leave that many members of the town complained, including the coloured editor of a newspaper, William Abbott, who wrote an angry editorial concerning the sailors' drunken behaviour. To retaliate, the sailors armed themselves with bludgeons and attempted to destroy Abbott's home and printing press. A large crowd of men, women and children assembled at Abbott's house to protect him, and the volunteer militia force was called. There was some violence until the sailors could be sent back on board their ship. The following day, some members of the militia publicly threw down their arms as a protest against the inactive part they were allowed to play in quelling the disturbance. The sailors had destroyed some property and had seriously beaten a boy who was returning from Chapel, but none of them had been arrested.

Eyre saw the militia's actions as further proof that non-white troops could not be called on in any emergency. He claimed they were too sympathetic to local causes and to their race, and he again expressed fears of a race riot. In

(19) CO 260/91, Hinks to Stanley, no. 30, 15 June 1858.

fact, Eyre's own allegiance to the white sailors prevented him for ensuring that local people were fairly treated.(20) His reactions to these events in St. Vincent contrasted greatly with those of his superiors, Colebrooke and Hinks. Both these men believed that local people could be called on to act loyally if appealed to correctly. Furthermore, they both accused Eyre of over-reacting. Colebrooke warned him not to see all small local skirmishes as active rebellions, and Hinks accused him 'of dwelling too much on the precarious position of a small island without troops'.(21)

In 1865, when Eyre was Governor of Jamaica, with access to troops and without the moderating influence of Colebrooke or Hinks, he put down the Morant Bay rebellion with a brutality that shocked many people in Britain. It is possible that the humiliation that he felt when he could not punish rioters in St. Vincent contributed to his determination to crush the Jamaican people. The swift arrest, trial and execution of George William Gordon may well have been partly a result of the prejudice that Eyre developed against the coloured elite in Kingstown.(22)

Protecting Family Honour.

The Kingstown protests were important because they helped weaken white control of the judiciary. Certainly,

(20) CO 260/92, Hinks to Lytton, no. 7, 20 January 1859.

(21) CO 260/84, Colebrooke to Sir G. Grey, no. 66, 10 December 1855; CO 260/91, Hinks to Stanley, no. 30, 15 June 1858.

(22) For an examination of Eyre's role in the suppression of the uprising in Jamaica see Gad Heuman, 'The Killing Time': The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica (London, 1994).

coloured men had held positions as justices of the peace since the early 1840s, but white law officers were still able to impose arbitrary sentences on non-white defendants. The riots reflect the determination of town dwellers to contest harsh court judgements. They also indicate the strength of the middle-class coloureds' influence on the local population. Law and order could only be maintained with their co-operation.

In the early 1860s, two events occurred which help to illustrate this, and they indicate that coloured men had adopted a form of masculine bravado to protect their class interests and family name. Both events centred around William Smith, a wealthy white planter and newspaper editor who was very unpopular with all sections of the community. His newspaper was reportedly extremely reactionary. He called for the reinstatement of slavery, and he declared that coloureds should be mutilated if they assaulted a white man as they had been under the slave codes. He also delighted in tracing the African ancestry of members of the coloured elite.(23) In 1862, he wrote an editorial, described by Lieutenant-Governor Musgrave as racist and derogatory, insulting William Lynch. To retaliate, Edward Lynch and Pharaoh Brewster, William Lynch's son and son-in-law, publicly horse-whipped Smith. However, Smith continued to print more inflammatory articles.

A few weeks later, a bell-man gathered together a crowd of around 100 people, and they paraded through town calling

(23) CO 260/100, Walker to Newcastle, no. 174, 12 October 1863.

on people to watch them burn Smith in effigy. A coloured barrister called Edward Ross and several of his employees and friends then went to Smith's press and with a sledge hammer destroyed some of the type. Smith later complained that the police made no efforts to protect his property.

Edward Lynch and Ross both attacked Smith to assuage their family honour. Lynch told Smith that he could write what he wanted, but not about a Lynch. Ross, in mitigation for his own actions, claimed that he smashed the press to stop Smith from publishing insulting remarks that would upset his wife and sisters. He did not explain what these remarks were, but it is probable that they concerned family connections to slavery and concubinage.

The outcome of these attacks show the advances made by the coloured elite to gain parity with whites. Lynch and Brewster were tried and throughout the case, people hissed at Smith. The men were merely fined three and five pounds. This was a far lower sentence than the one imposed on the mariner, who in 1857 had merely sworn at a white man. Furthermore, Smith claimed that Lynch and Brewster continued to threaten him after the trial, and he could get no protection from the police. The trial against Ross was also heavily biased against Smith, and the Chief Justice apparently entertained the jury with tales of Ross's exemplary boyhood. The jury acquitted him of trespass and Smith was forced to take out a civil action for damages. Ross was then allowed to leave the island without paying the Civil court fine.(24)

(24) CO 260/98, Walker to Newcastle, no. 66, 15 September 1862; CO 260/100, Walker to Newcastle, no. 174, 12 October

Conclusion.

Urban rioters had different motivations from labouring protesters. Disturbances involving rural labourers usually revolved around common grievances concerning taxes, pay and conditions. For example, riots that occurred in Scarborough in 1853 were led by rural workers who entered the town to make their protest. They focussed on the issue of taxes. Similar concerns sparked riots in Tortolla and, again, the rioters were from the rural areas who chose the town as the arena of their protest.⁽²⁵⁾ Riots involving town residents, on the other hand, often centred around individuals who faced some form of discrimination under the law and therefore can be seen as race rather than labour riots. While there were some participants within these riots with radical and political views, the majority of the rioters reacted against individual cases of discrimination rather than attempting to overthrow all white authority.

The Kingstown riots further reveal that coloured agitators were able to exploit the distrust and antagonism between the African-Caribbean labouring poor and the predominantly white authorities. When coloured people faced discrimination, the poor in the towns came to the aid of people who were not of their social class. Although the

1863; CO 260/102, Walker to Cardwell, no. 279, 29 October 1864.

(25) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 8 January 1853; 3 September, 1853; 1 October 1853. See also Bridget Brereton, 'Post-Emancipation Protest in the Caribbean; The Belmanna Riots in Tobago', in Caribbean Quarterly, vol. 30 (September to December 1984), pp. 110-123.

coloured elite of St. Vincent wanted parity with the whites, they did not seek to improve the conditions of the lower classes. When rioters from the lower class were themselves arrested, the middle class did little to assure their release. In fact, urban outbreaks did not succeed in improving the conditions of the poor. By the 1860s, elite coloureds who broke the law had become able to avoid tough sentences, yet the poor continued to be heavily punished.

Moreover, a few months after the attacks on Smith, labourers from the estates on the windward coast rioted and looted to protest wage reductions and poor working conditions. Coloured men were at the forefront of the suppression of these rioters. Van Heyningan led the cavalry against them and was accused of murdering an unarmed protester. Another coloured man, James Browne was also suspected of killing an unarmed man who was hiding under a bed. Peter Caruth struck a labourer over the head, although the labourer was unarmed and had not been involved in the riots. Hazell was a justice in the court proceedings against the rioters, and his nephew was also accused of killing a protester. Ironically, it was William Smith who protested most vehemently against abuses committed against the 1862 rural rioters to the British Government and Anti-Slavery Society. In later years, Van Heyningan was appointed chief of police and attempted unsuccessfully to prohibit masquerading. He was severely beaten for this and was later removed from office due to incompetence.(26)

(26) Details of the riots can be found in Woodville Marshall, '"Vox populi": The St. Vincent Riots and Disturbances of 1862' in Barry Higman, (ed) Trade Government and Society in Caribbean History, 1700-1930 (Kingston, 1983)

In both Britain and the Caribbean, newspaper reports and official correspondence that described town riots tended to stereotype rioters. In St. Vincent, rioters were usually referred to as a 'mob', and women, in particular, were subject to censure. This was common in other regions. In other Caribbean islands, the towns were often the scenes of violent protests, and it is noticeable that descriptions of the participants in town riots were similar. The ruling authorities wanted to disparage rioters as a way of denying their rights to parity under the law. For example, in 1850, a riot took place in Port of Spain in Trinidad. It was also in response to authoritarianism, in this case the attempts of the legislature to introduce hair shaving and prison work to debtors as well as felons in prison. It began with an angry gathering and quickly escalated into violence, despite the promise by the Governor to amend the legislature's Act. The main targets in this riot, as in the 1841 riot in Kingstown, were the police and a government building. Newspaper reports on this riot described the participants as 'the very dregs of the population, .. a large number of loose women, (including the vilest and worst of their class) girls, boys, lately imported Africans, etc. .. all more or less eager for a riot'. Newspaper reporters described the people who led riots in Scarborough in 1853 over a land tax, as 'the scum of Barbados - jail-birds'. Disturbances also occurred in St John in Antigua in 1858, when porters and stevedores rioted to protest their lack of work and to try

and chapter 10 of this thesis. The masqueraders' riot is discussed in chapter 8.

to stop the employment of men from Barbuda. These rioters were described as the 'lowest class in the town'. By denigrating the participants in the disturbances, the newspaper editors attempted to deny the legitimacy of the rioters' protests.(27)

Urban protests also reveal the different attitudes to gender roles and class affiliations among town dwellers. Poor women were significant in both leading and prolonging unrest, and women who participated in riots were particularly subject to disparagement. The women protesters in Trinidad were described as 'loose', and the Vincentian women protesters were described as the 'worse conducted' of the rioters. In Grenada, in 1852, when women protested against the arrest of some soldiers, they were described as 'dissolute women'. This was also the case in riots in Jamaica, when some women participants were described as females of 'abandoned character'.(28) Middle-class women, on the other hand, were distanced from any form of protest. They took no part in the riots along side their poorer sisters and did not sign the petitions of their men. In fact, they were cushioned by their male family members. Thus, in order to maintain her claim to respectability, Grant remained swooning in her brother's home while he

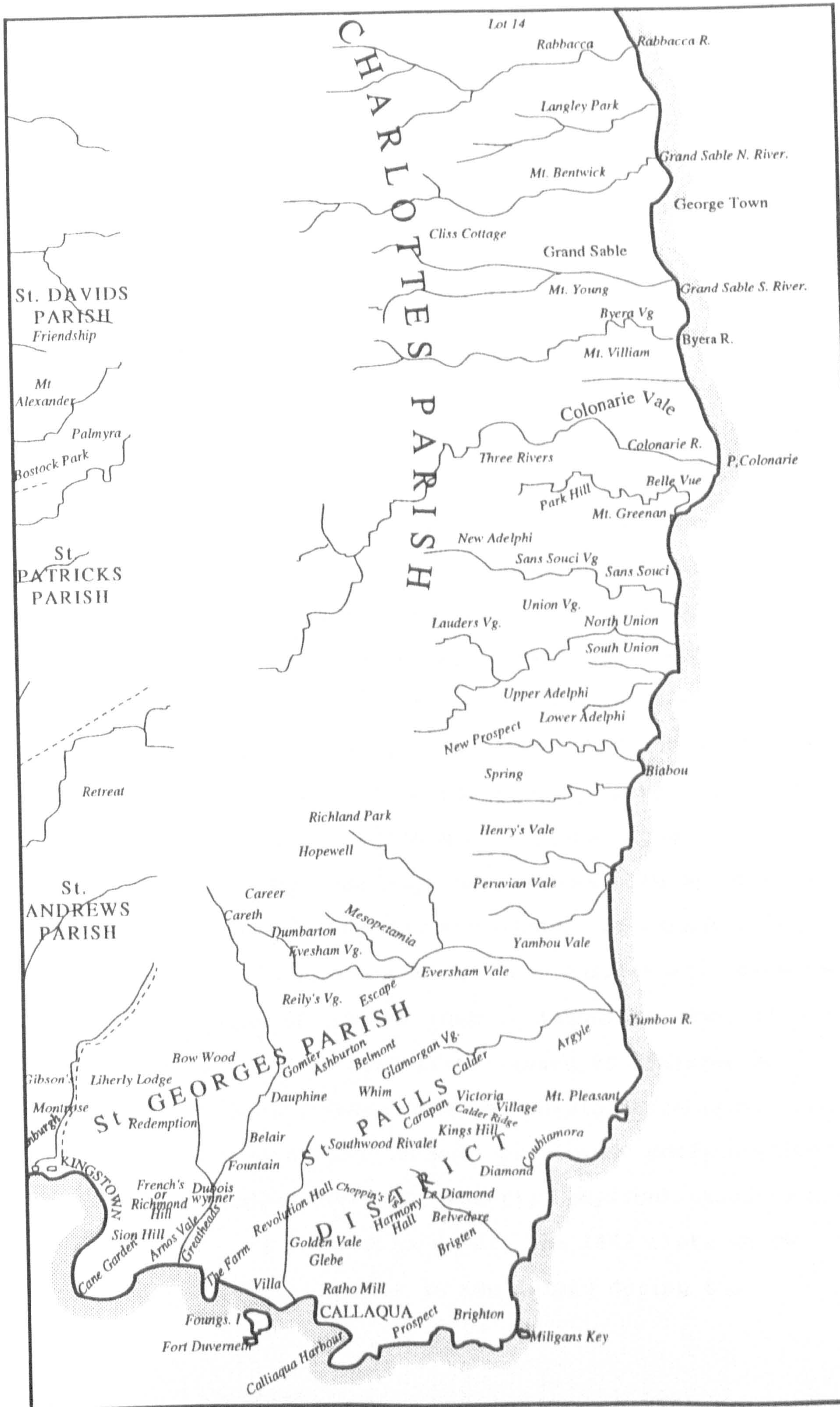
(27) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 11 October 1850; 8 January 1853; 3 September, 1853; 1 October 1853.

(28) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser 10 January 1852; Swithin Wilmot, '"Females of Abandoned Character"? Women and Protest in Jamaica, 1838-1865' in Vererne Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey, (eds) Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective (Kingstown, 1995 p. 286.

petitioned Eyre to quash her sentence, and Mrs Ross and her sisters-in-law were protected from exposure to Smith's insults when Edward Ross and his male friends smashed the press.

The success of the Kingstown rioters also suggests that the police force was both incompetent and inadequate and could not function without the assistance and co-operation of volunteers. While the riots in St. Vincent in the 1850s were met by little opposition from the police, rioters in other Caribbean towns faced excessive police violence. In Port of Spain, one man and one woman were shot dead and another woman was wounded by the police. In Antigua, also, in the 1858 riots, the police killed eight men, women and children and fourteen others were wounded. In St. Vincent, the police could only confront rioters when they had additional assistance from either British troops or the local militia. Hence, none of the rioters in the towns in the 1850s were arrested, but over two hundred labourers were tried after the 1862 rural protest.(29)

(29) CO 260/73, Colebrooke to Sir G. Grey, no. 26, 3 June 1850, The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser 11 October 1850; 10 January 1852; CO7/109, Hamilton to Lord Stanley, no. 21, 27 March 1858.



Chapter Ten.

Protests.

The fifty-year period that followed the abolition of slavery in St Vincent was far from peaceful and conflicts between plantation managers and labourers led to several forms of protest. Some acts of defiance involved individuals who chose violence or vandalism to express their anger or frustration about their employers' actions. Other protests involved groups of labourers from one or more estates who acted collectively. Most of these protests can be attributed to very similar disagreements and occurred with regularity several times during the period studied here. They were the result of planters attempting to reduce their costs by withdrawing labourers' so-called privileges or reducing their pay, usually in a manner that labourers found offensive and cynical. It is interesting to note that the majority of the larger protests took place along the windward coast. This may have been because the estates in this district were larger and the conduct of managers was especially hostile to labourers. This chapter will examine the various types of protest used by labourers, many of which followed on from traditional forms of resistance employed by slaves. These include non-violent actions, such as strikes and petitions, as well as violent confrontations involving the destruction of property, physical assaults and rioting. It will examine in detail the 1862 riots which formed the largest outbreak in the island during the

nineteenth century. It will also assess the different attitudes towards gender roles within these disputes and, in particular, examine the actions of women labourers.

Individual Protests.

Every year, it was likely that several hundred labourers were in conflict with their managers. Stipendiary magistrates who were responsible for overseeing these conflicts reported the large number of petty offences committed by labourers. These included non-performance of work, maiming cattle, insubordination and absence from work, all common forms of protest during slavery and apprenticeship. Occasionally labourers, particularly men, were even imprisoned for labour offences but the usual punishments for these actions involved the deduction of a fine from the labourer's wages, or eviction.⁽¹⁾ What these conflicts reveal is how little labour relations progressed after abolition. In 1844, for example, Nathaniel Struth, the magistrate for the southern district, dealt with 204 cases, mainly for non performance of work. Polson the magistrate for the leeward district dealt with 145 cases under the Masters and Servant Act, although some of Polson's cases included charges made by labourers for non-payment of wages. In 1846 there were 442 cases involving conflicts between estate managers and labourers island wide in six months.⁽²⁾

(1) CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, no. 18, 6 May 1839, Report from the Inspector of Prisons.

(2) CO 260/64, Grey to Stanley, no. 29, 6 June 1844, Stipendiary Magistrate Struth's report; CO 265/3,

Stipendiary magistrates had no guidelines on how to deal with cases between employers and employees, and their verdicts and punishments differed greatly. John Anderson, for example, was reputed to be biased towards planters and imposed heavy fines or evictions. He was convinced that if labourers protested their innocence, they were likely to be guilty. Nathaniel Struth, who was an estate attorney and son of a plantation owner as well as being grand master of the Masons and minister of the Anglican Church, also delivered judgements in favour of planters. In 1840, when he was Speaker of the House of Assembly, he complained that labourers could not be compelled to sign yearly contracts and claimed that it was 'innocuous' to claim that planters would demand excessive labour if workers were given yearly contracts. Edward Polson, one of the longest serving magistrates in the island, reputedly told managers that they should refuse to pay labourers who chose to quit their estates any wages due to them. This was because the cost of complaining to the stipendiary magistrates was often too expensive for labourers and more than the wages owed to them.⁽³⁾

When magistrates appeared to favour labourers, planters frequently complained to the governors. Planters accused

Stipendiary Magistrates' Returns, Consolidated Table, 25 February 1846.

(3) CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, 17 June 1839, Tyler to Anderson, 9 May 1839; University of Aberdeen, Manuscript, John Anderson's Journal, 1836-1839, p. 28; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 20 June 1846; St. Vincent Archives, Dispatches, 91002 28/10, MacGregor to Tyler, 5 December 1838; CO 260/80, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 49, 26 July 1853, Ross Castle to McDowell.

John Nanton and John Pemberton Ross of siding with labourers immediately after emancipation, and Nanton was even criticised in the House of Assembly for supporting women's demands for a seven-hour day.⁽⁴⁾ Ross was particularly unpopular with planters who accused him of being responsible for their labourers' refusal to accept their employment conditions. However, he was also responsible for illegally imprisoning a gang of women indefinitely for being 'refractory and contumacious'. In fact, both men came from planter families and, before the abolition of slavery, had spoken out against emancipation.⁽⁵⁾ In 1854 William Stewart, another lawyer, made himself very unpopular with planters by upholding an employee's right to retain wages due to him after he had been dismissed. Stewart was dismissed from the magistracy when he became a member of the Assembly.⁽⁶⁾

The Colonial Office employed magistrates to protect labourers from unfair hearings by the Justices of the Peace. However, as many of them were recruited locally, they were often related to or acquainted with the planter class. Robert Sutherland, for example, was the magistrate for twenty-eight estates, yet he had family connections with the managers or owners of fifteen of these estates. The high costs of petitioning to the magistrates and the fact that

(4) CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, no. 25, 14 May 1839, Report from the Committee of the Honourable House of Assembly of St. Vincent on the working of the system of free labour; St. Vincent Archives, Dispatches, 91002 3/3, Brown to Sutherland, 13 March 1841.

(5) CO 260/49, Hill to Goderich, no. 21, 11 June 1832.

(6) CO 260/80, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 49, 26 July 1853, Ross Castle to McDowell.

magistrates and managers shared common class interests ensured that labourers did not always receive a fair hearing. It is therefore not surprising that many workers often chose to use illegal methods to protest during labour disputes.(7)

Arson.

Planters in St. Vincent, wanted a docile and intimidated labour force. They expected 'gratitude' from their workers for releasing them from slavery rather than resentment for attempting to perpetuate some of the same slave conditions. Labourers were accused of guarding their perceived privileges 'jealously' and reacting 'suspiciously' to any actions undertaken by plantation managers.(8) This atmosphere of resentment and antipathy sometimes resulted in violence. Arson was a frequent weapon used by disgruntled labourers in the Caribbean and in other regions. In England, for example, the Swing riots of 1834 were accompanied by the burning of grain stores as were the Rebecca riots of 1839.(9) The force of destruction was immediate and very visible and fires that were set deliberately were greatly feared by planters and the

(7) CO 260/70, Colebrooke to Grey, no. 29, 17 August 1849, The New Era, 4 July 1849.

(8) CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, no. 25, 14 May 1839, Report from the Committee of the Honourable House of Assembly of St. Vincent on the working of the system of free labour; CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, no. 12, 6 April 1839, Memorial from Cummings, Sutherland etc to Tyler, 18 February 1839.

(9) J.P.D. Dunbarn, Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain (London, 1974), pp. 20-22, 30.

authorities. Therefore, arson was a very satisfying crime for people dispossessed of political power. Furthermore, lack of forensic knowledge made it very difficult for the authorities to detect the guilty parties. Individuals could easily set fires without being detected by leaving a smouldering candle among trash in the cane fields or megass houses. Additionally, a burning cane field or megass house required a large force to extinguish the flames, and workers could voice their support of the arsonist by refusing to assist in fighting the fire. Arson also had historical significance for labourers in the Caribbean. Slave insurrections were frequently heralded by fires. In Haiti, slaves burned down many estates as they battled for freedom. In Jamaica, fires were set as a signal to coordinate the beginning of the 1831 slave uprising.⁽¹⁰⁾ Arson, therefore was used as both revenge and a threat to planters. Arsonists retaliated against lost wages, evictions or insults by causing financial loss to their protagonists. They also used arson to hint at the destruction they could cause if their wages were reduced.

Because it was so difficult to detect the arsonist, the authorities were sometimes baffled by the reasons why a fire was set. Fairhall plantation, which was located near Kingstown, was particularly plagued with arson attacks. In 1836, for example, there were six arson attacks. The arsonist was not caught, and Polson sentenced all the

(10) David Geggus, 'The Haitian Revolution', in Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (eds.), Caribbean Slave Society and Economy (Kingston, 1991), p.406; Mary Turner, Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787-1834 (Illinois, 1992), p. 148.

labourers to lose their free Saturdays. In 1839 more fires were set, and, again, the arsonist was never caught. Lieutenant-Governor Tyler could only suggest that the fires were the result of a rivalry between two groups of labourers. However, the magistrate noticed that most of the labourers on the estate refused to continue working there. In 1845, more fires were set at Fairhall on three days during March. A reward for \$100 was offered for the conviction of the arsonist because there had been no conviction in 1839. However, six months later, there were two much more serious fires. Four people were arrested and the reward was increased to \$800. Charges were later dropped against those arrested, and no one gave evidence to claim the reward. This would indicate that the arsonists had the support of the labourers.(11)

It was very rare for arsonists to be convicted, despite the often biased and prejudiced law courts. When a defendant was convicted, however, sentences were harsh. For example, Lucinda Robertson was sentenced to three years' hard labour for burning down a dwelling house in 1848. She had been found close to the house carrying belongings from it. In 1860, Sally Diamond received a sentence of two years' hard labour for arson, and in 1862, arsonist Rebecca Alpreet was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labour.(12)

(11) CO 260/54, Smith to Glenelg, no. 15, 3 May 1836, Stipendiary Magistrate Polson's Returns for February; CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, no. 25, 28 September 1839, Enclosure, Tyler to MacGregor, 19 September 1839; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 15 March 1845; 17 April 1847; 25 September 1847; 2 October 1847.

(12) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 18 November 1848; St. Vincent Court House Criminal Note Book, 1860-1869: 13 February 1860; 9 May 1862.

In 1847, there were a series of fires on several plantations. Arnos Vale, Campden Park, Richmond Hill, Penniston, Rutland Vale, Belleview and Akers Hill were all attacked. The Lieutenant-Governor was so concerned that he issued a proclamation condemning the fires. This proclamation reveals the incredible impact that the fires had on the ruling classes. He declared; 'Every person who knows what is right from what is wrong, and can feel the difference from what is good and what is evil, is shocked and alarmed at the villainous acts of fire raising'. He promised that when the arsonists were discovered, 'they will be held up to the execration of their fellow men'. He further stated that it was the duty of all to discover the guilty as a 'divine mandate'. However, the culprits and the causes of the fires were not discovered. Campbell believed that the fires were set 'for the sake of indulging malice against those in authority', and he declared this a folly as estate owners and not overseers were the ones who suffered from the attacks. But this makes it clear that Campbell was aware that labourers suffered injustices at the hands of plantation managers.⁽¹³⁾ It may also have been significant that these fires, as well as some of the fires at Fairhall, were set in September, after the crop had been harvested and during the period that new conditions and contracts were set for the following year. The fires in 1847 may also have been a response to rumours that wages would decrease as

(13) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 17 April 1847; 25 September 1847; 2 October 1847; CO 260/68, Reid to Grey, no. 38, 9 October 1847, Campbell to Reid, 6 October 1847.

planters began to feel the effects of the British 1846 Sugar Duties Act.

Strikes.

In his study on collective behaviour, Jerry Rose suggested that there are three main prerequisites which can result in collective forms of protest. Firstly, large numbers of people need to harbour similar grievances; secondly, they need the ability to mobilise themselves to protest as a group; and thirdly, the authorities must be unresponsive to any other forms of political demands.⁽¹⁴⁾ In the Caribbean these conditions were regularly present after emancipation. Labourers shared common restrictions and grudges over pay, privileges and tenancy. They were united as a group and had easy access to friends and peers on other estates. Additionally, magistrates' courts were usually heavily weighted in the planters' favour. Therefore, labourers frequently used work stoppages and go-slows to protest.

During the first year of full emancipation, strikes were extremely common mainly because of the yearly contracts that were imposed on labourers. The first action took place immediately after August 1st when labourers from the Carib district went on strike for over two weeks because they objected to the terms of the Act.⁽¹⁵⁾ As a result of this

(14) Jerry D. Rose, Outbreaks: The Sociology of Collective Behaviour (New York, 1982), p. 76.

(15) CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, no. 25, 14 May 1839, Report from the Committee of the Honourable House of Assembly of St. Vincent on the working of the system of free labour.

strike and ensuing months of refusing to work or working very indifferently, many managers were unable to plant any new canes, and some were unable to harvest all their ripe canes before they rotted in the fields. The agent for the Windward islands, John Colquhurn, sent copies of letters to the Colonial Secretary from many managers complaining of their labourers' refusal to work. Nathaniel Struth, writing as an attorney for Prospect estate, complained of 'the dreadful trouble one has to make the free gentry work after sundown!'. Alex Cummings wrote that he believed that labourers had a plan to stop planting sugar so they could take over the land. In addition, attorneys for the Carib district in Charlotte sent two memorials to Tyler because of the trouble that they were experiencing as their labourers refused to work. In 1839 labour relations improved slightly, mainly because labourers were able to settle for monthly rather than yearly contracts.⁽¹⁶⁾

However, strike action continued sporadically during the early 1840s. On some estates there were short strikes when managers employed tactics that labourers believed disadvantaged them. These strikes were often used in conjunction with other forms of protest. For example, when the attorney on Richmond estate sent his labourers from the neighbouring estate, Wallibou, to Richmond to help with the sugar cane harvest, the Richmond people struck and expelled

(16) CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, Agents Reports, Colquhurn to Normanby 6 April 1839; CO 260/57, MacGregor to Glenelg, no. 227, 23 August 1838, Cummings, Sutherland etc to Tyler, 11 August 1838; CO 260/58, MacGregor to Normanby, no. 12, 6 April 1839, Cummings Sutherland etc to Tyler 18 February 1838.

those from Wallibou. The manager of the estate blamed one family for instigating the trouble and, in particular, claimed that the women in the family threatened the Wallibou people most.⁽¹⁷⁾ On Grand Sable, labourers refused to work for four days after 1 August 1843 because they wished to continue celebrating Emancipation Day. Several were fined by the magistrate, and in the ensuing riots, two women were arrested and taken to the gaol in Kingstown. They were eventually released by the Lieutenant-Governor and were paraded triumphantly around the estate. Later, the manager's provision crops were destroyed.⁽¹⁸⁾ These reports of minor disruptions reveal the power struggles within plantations. Labourers objected to any attempts by managers to implement new conditions or restrict their freedom. Managers wanted to impose their will without negotiations or explanations.

While most of these riots were restricted to one or two estates, there were two large protests in St Vincent before the 1862 riots. Both were in response to a concerted effort by planters to reduce wages and privileges, and they reveal the growing militancy of labourers and, in particular, the free villagers. The first protests took place when planters announced a reduction of wages to five pence per day in August 1848. Some planters announced the reduction in the middle of the month, informing their labourers that they would have to accept the new rate or face immediate

⁽¹⁷⁾ CO 260/59, MacGregor to Russell, no. 1, 10 February 1840.

⁽¹⁸⁾ The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: Saturday 12 August, 1843; Saturday 19 August 1843.

eviction. According to one missionary, almost three-quarters of the work force went on strike, and villagers often used threats to force those still working to join in the strike. This action lasted over six weeks, but although the atmosphere was hostile and threatening, there was no violence.⁽¹⁹⁾

The strike revealed some real injustices when planters attempted to circumvent the law and intimidate their labourers to accept the new rates. Residents on the plantations were threatened with losing their provision crops if they refused the new rates and on one estate, Robert Chapman, the overseer, refused to pay the labourers any of the wages due to them for the preceding months. One missionary estimated that the wages due to the labourers were worth between one and three pounds sterling each as they were still owed their crop money from the last harvest. Labourers summoned Chapman to the petty debts court to ensure that he paid them their wages. In addition, the Lieutenant-Governor ordered the stipendiary magistrates to enable labourers to harvest all their provision crops when the crops were ripe, if they chose not to work at a reduced rate. The unanimous actions of labourers and the illegal actions of some of the planters ensured the strike was partially successful. Planters were forced to capitulate and, by January 1849, most resident labourers were receiving their old rates, although planters refused to allow them further free medical attention. Village labourers were very

(19) WMMS Box 142, File 1848, no. 71, Hudson to General Secretaries, 6 October 1848.

active in both initiating and sustaining this strike. However, planters were reluctant to continue with the higher 'strangers' rate of pay, and villagers were forced to continue striking for a longer period to receive their old rates of pay.⁽²⁰⁾

The language used by the Lieutenant-Governor in his description of the events reveals the double standards of a society with such rigid class and race structures. Campbell was aware that it was the 'injudicious conduct of a few of the Planters' that had caused the escalation of the strike and the anger of labourers, but he also blamed 'evil intentioned persons' who, he claimed, influenced the labourers.⁽²¹⁾ In both this case and after the fires of the previous year, Campbell described the actions of the planting class as merely wrong or injudicious, but the labourers who reacted to these wrongs were represented as evil, malicious and villainous. As we shall see later in this chapter, this class bias was especially revealed in the aftermath of the 1862 riots. Harsh punishments were meted out to labouring participants in the riots, while the planters whose illegal actions caused the riots, and whose conduct during the riots was excessively violent were not even charged.

In January 1854 the withdrawal of British troops from St. Vincent alarmed many European inhabitants. The

(20) Ibid; CO 260/69, Colebrooke to Stanley, no. 4, 26 October 1848; WMMS Box 142, File 1849, no. 3, Hudson to General Secretaries, 6 January 1849.

(21) CO 260/69, Colebrooke to Stanley, no. 4, 26 October 1848.

Lieutenant-Governor, John McDowell, sent letters to the Colonial Secretary at the end of 1853, requesting that the decision be changed and citing instances of unrest during the previous ten years. In fact, two of his examples were so minor that they went unreported in the local newspapers and Colonial Office reports. However, there had been serious riots in Tobago and Tortola in 1853. In Tobago, rioters had protested the imposition of a land tax, and troops had been used to quell the riot. In Tortola a tax on cattle had met with a similar response from labourers. Here many European inhabitants fled the island, and there was much destruction before Danish troops arrived from St. Thomas. The withdrawal of British troops from this island was seen as a significant contributory factor in this protest. Labourers were accused of 'playing the St Domingo Tragedy', and the use of foreign European troops clearly indicates fears that many whites had of a black uprising. According to McDowell, Vincentian labourers had threatened that once troops were withdrawn, there would be a repetition of these riots in St Vincent.(22)

Despite the fears of riots and despite the fact that both recent protests in the Caribbean had been caused by the imposition of new taxes, McDowell approved three new Acts in January 1854. These were the increase of an ad valorem tax on many imported goods popular with labourers, a tax on rum,

(22) CO 260/79, Colebrooke to Newcastle, no. 4, 26 January 1854, Address to the Lieutenant Governor from the House of Assembly; S.V.A. Dispatches, 91002/3/4, McDowell to Colebrooke: no. 63, 5 November 1853; no. 76, 3 December 1853; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 8 January 1853; 3 September 1853; 10 September 1853; 1 October 1853.

the main alcoholic drink of the labouring classes, and the cessation of the rum allowance handed out to labourers as one of their traditional privileges. Merchants also added to the general anger of labourers by increasing their prices by about 200 per cent.(23)

The response of the labouring population was almost immediate. On Monday 16 January, gangs of labourers from the windward section of the island marched to Kingstown to protest the new measures. McDowell was not there and in their frustration, the labourers were reported to have attacked people working at Arnos Vale estate and overturned several carts as they returned home. The following day labourers from the leeward side also marched to Kingstown, but they too were unable to meet the Lieutenant-Governor. On the Thursday, McDowell met 200 labourers who protested about the price increases and the stoppage of their rum allowance. By this time there was also a general strike throughout the island.(24)

Village residents were once more instrumental in this strike. The following Saturday and Monday, McDowell and James Porter, an attorney and local Justice, visited several villages and estates to offer labourers an increase in their wages of one penny per day in lieu of the rum allowance. On Calder, McDowell was met by 600 to 800 labourers, most of

(23) CO 260/79, Colebrooke to Newcastle, no. 4, 26 January 1854, Address to the Lieutenant-Governor from the House of Assembly; S.V.A. Dispatches, 91002/3/4, McDowell to Colebrooke, 26 January 1854, no. 14.

(24) The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser: 21 January 1854; 28 January 1854; S.V.A. Dispatches, 91002/3/4, McDowell to Colebrooke, 19 January 1854 no. 7.

whom were from Victoria village. McDowell described these labourers as 'marked with great disrespect and violence of demeanour'. Some of the labourers tried to stop him from speaking, but McDowell claimed: 'I am not, however, very easily put down and I did not desist until I had made my sentiments known'. As McDowell and Porter returned home, however, several women made their own sentiments known, by hurling large stones at Porter. He also received death threats and left the island in July.(25)

Protests and strikes continued until the beginning of February when labourers agreed to a daily pay increase of either one or two pennies. There was some violence during the protest and a small amount of destruction. Stock and carts were stolen or destroyed, and the distillery at Peruvian Vale was almost destroyed. There were also several fires at Grand Sable and one woman, Mary Ann Toby, was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for arson.(26)

Men and women were equally involved in all these early protests. Both sexes were brought before magistrates for minor conflicts, and both men and women were arsonists as were the strikers of 1848 and 1854. Furthermore, men and women carried out the intimidation of non-participants in protests. While women were the only ones noted for throwing

(25) S.V.A. Dispatches, 91002/3/4, McDowell to Colebrooke, 26 January 1854, no. 14; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 15 July 1854.

(26) WMMS Box 143, File 1854, no. 14, Hurd to General Secretaries, 8 February 1854; S.V.A. Dispatches, 91002/3/4, McDowell to Colebrooke, 26 January 1854, no. 14; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser 25 February 1854; St. Vincent Court House Grand Sessions Note Book, 1846-1859, 7 February 1854.

stones at Porter in 1854, both sexes exhibited a general anger and ferocity. Within labour disputes that arose spontaneously, women were able to assume strong leadership positions. They were noticeable in all nineteenth-century riots and strikes within the Caribbean. As slave and apprentice women had helped lead and sustain protests, so did free female labourers.(27)

However, E.P. Thompson's research into protests in Britain revealed that women led many of the food riots in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but when riots were orchestrated, pamphlets often addressed only men. In addition, Sally Alexander's research has also indicated that English women were active in many impromptu strikes and protests; however, when the leadership was democratically elected and labour conditions were negotiated formally with employers, female involvement often became more peripheral. Similar scenes arose in Jamaica during the 1850s, when peasants began using petitions as a means of protesting. Women were often either excluded or marginalised into separate committees. In the petitions sent to the 1884 Select Committee investigating the economic collapse within the Caribbean, the letters from St. Vincent labourers also bore only male signatures. In addition, in the Caribbean,

(27) In the Caribbean, there was a strong tradition of female leadership in slave revolts and conspiracies, partly because West African women had previously assumed military roles before being enslaved. See Barbara Bush, Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838 (London, 1990), pp. 68-72 and also chapter 2 for women apprentices' roles during labour protests.

women's roles within trade unions, were also often peripheral or administrative, rather than central.(28)

Antagonism between planters and labourers, as these altercations indicate, were over two main interrelated issues: wage rates and privileges. Wages were far lower after emancipation than during apprenticeship in St. Vincent and were not always paid on time or in full. Many of the privileges of the early emancipation era were eroded. Free medical attendance, salt fish and other provisions and the controversial rum allowance were gradually denied the creole labour force, although still given to indentured labourers. However, labourers resident on estates retained their provision grounds. By the beginning of the 1860s, the only allowances received by all labourers were molasses and sugary drinks. It was these last privileges that planters sought to abolish in 1862 which was partly responsible for the most violent protests of the century.

(28) E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', Past and Present, no. 50 (1971), pp. 115-116; Sally Alexander, 'Women, Class and Sex Differences in the 1830s and 1840s: Some Reflections on the Writing of a Feminist History', History Workshop Journal, 17, (Spring 1984), p. 136; Mimi Sheller, 'Democracy after Slavery: Black Publics and Peasant Rebellion in Postemancipation Haiti and Jamaica' (PhD thesis, New School for Social Research, 1996), pp.287, 303. PP 1884 (3840-1) xlvii pp. 118-125. Linnette Vassall's work on women involvement in left-wing parties indicates that they were primarily used as secretaries and fundraisers within the committees. Linnette Vassall, 'Women of the Masses: Daphne Campbell and the 'left' politics in Jamaica in the 1950s' in Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton, Barbara Bailey (eds) Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective (Kingston, 1995) pp.318-337.

The 1862 Protests.

After a period of economic stability and stable sugar prices during the late 1850s, there was a significant decline in sugar prices by 1862. Missionaries during this period noted the poverty of labourers as work became scarce and wage payments were often deferred. During 1862, a few planters along the windward coast stopped giving their labourers allowances of sweet drinks and molasses. On some estates the wages were reduced to three dollars a month from four dollars and on other estates, there were rumours of an impending wage reduction.⁽²⁹⁾

The riots that took place along the windward coast in 1862 differed from previous protests because of the intensity of the destruction caused by protesters and the violence of the forces sent to control them. In his work on collective forms of protest, Jerry Rose theorised that there are four main phases in group protests. Firstly, there is the confrontation phase, when protesters reveal their demands. If these demands are not met, they move into a 'Roman Holiday' phase, when they use violence and destruction to express their demands. This phase is characterised by a sense of euphoria as protesters feel that they have taken control. Rose calls the third phase 'war', as it describes the authorities' attempts to regain power through force. Finally, there is the termination of the

(29) Douglas Hall Free Jamaica, 1838-1865: An Economic History (Yale, 1959), p. 270; WMMS Box 229, File 1862, no. 6, Barratt to General Secretaries, 18 January 1862; no. 52, Barratt to General Secretaries, 24 June 1862; CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 89, 1 January 1863, Bench of Magistrates' report, 18 December 1862.

protest, when the rioters capitulate and the authorities recover control.⁽³⁰⁾ These four phases were clearly present in the 1862 riots.

Confrontations began on 7 September 1862. As a result of rumours of a wage reduction and probably incited by threats and insults offered to them by Charles Austin, an English overseer, labourers on Mount Bentwick in the Carib district set fire to a megass house and also diverted a water course and sabotaged a water wheel to ensure the fire could not be quickly put out. To punish them, the manager, Robert Aitken, withdrew their molasses allowances for a week. However, at the end of the second week, the allowances were not paid and labourers went to Aitken to complain. Aitken promised to pay the allowances, claiming that a mistake had been made. Many of the labourers were not satisfied and decided to leave the estate and they asked for the wages due to them. Aitken told them their wages had been delayed. He then reacted to this proposed walk-out by going to the provision grounds and having all the labourers' crops removed. During the next few days, labourers demonstrated their anger by setting more fires and threatening the overseer. They also threatened the indentured Indian labourers and chased them away from the estate. Aitken sent for the police and the local constable was assaulted. Police reinforcements arrived the next day and a large crowd of well-armed men, women and children confronted them. Aitken told the labourers that, because of their behaviour, he would not now have their wages collected

(30) Rose, Outbreaks pp. 101-103.

from town until they returned to work. The protesters refused to submit to the police or return to work.

In this initial confrontation, labourers used a combination of legal and illegal means to express their grievances. However, the response of the manager increased their discontent and the police presence escalated the hostilities.⁽³¹⁾

During this period, a man called George Bascombe emerged as the main spokesman and leader of the labourers. He was from Barbados, was married to another labourer and had a large family. He was also a member of the Wilderness sect, which would indicate that he was independent and unwilling to accept European influences.⁽³²⁾ In the initial confrontations between the labourers and managers and later the police, both sexes were present in the gangs of labourers. Men and women were armed and threatened to fight. However, after the police had been defeated, Bascombe, dressed in hat and ribbons, was declared King. He took a gang of thirty men to George Town where they demanded rum, cigars and food from a Portuguese shop. Women were excluded from this display of machismo victory, although,

(31) WMMS Box 229, File 1862, no. 86, Greathead to General Secretaries, 24 October 1862; CO 260/98, Walker to Newcastle, no. 69, 11 October 1862, Musgrave to Walker, 7 October 1862; CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 126, 8 May 1863, Synopsis of convictions and sentences of prisoners on the occasion of the riots. The exact order of these events are not clear from the conflicting evidence of missionary letters, the labourers petition to Musgrave and the witness statement given by Aitken during the court case.

(32) For more information on the Wilderness Church, see chapter 7. CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 89, 1 January 1863, Chief Justice Sharpe to Musgrave, 23 December 1862.

ironically, it was their presence that had forestalled the police from shooting into the crowds.

In order to end this confrontation, Lieutenant-Governor Musgrave rode to George Town. He listened to the labourers' complaints and promised them that he would have the actions of the overseer and manager investigated before the participants in the riots were arrested. He also received a letter from the protesters listing their grievances. The labourers were satisfied and returned to Mount Bentwick. They took no further action.⁽³³⁾

This should have heralded the end of the disturbance. In 1848 and 1854, the Lieutenant-Governors had been able to forestall any increase in violence through their intervention. However, in 1862, conditions were far worse for labourers. Many estates had been abandoned, the presence of immigrant labourers made jobs still scarcer, and wages were at their lowest. The labourers at Mount Bentwick were satisfied with their outcome and believed that they would receive justice. Their show of force in confronting the estate managers, police and town merchants had helped to release their anger. However, labourers throughout the windward estates had also experienced similar grievances, and these had not been dealt with. There were several rumours circulating which helped to strengthen the feelings of discontent. One of these rumours indicates that some labourers continued to believe that the British Government remained friendly towards Caribbean labourers. The rumour

(33) CO 260/98, Walker to Newcastle, no. 69, 11 October 1862, Musgrave to Walker, 7 October 1862.

suggested that Musgrave had promised labourers wages of one shilling a day but the planters had refused. However, there was also hearsay that Musgrave and David Cowie, an attorney, had made bets on whether Cowie could reduce his wages to four pence per day. It was also said that missionaries had decided that four pence a day was enough for labourers in the West Indies. These reports indicate that other labourers felt alienated from all Europeans. Some labourers also believed that Musgrave had only agreed to look into the demands of labourers from Mount Bentwick because he was afraid.(34)

In response to these rumours, and the grievances experienced on many estates, strikes occurred at Sans Souci around 22 to 24 September and labourers were seen discussing the events at Mount Bentwick.(35) The riots that ensued, as labourers took their 'Roman Holiday' and planters retaliated against them in the 'War' phase of the protest, revealed deep seated and intense racial and social divides.

In order to understand these divides, it is useful to examine in detail the actions and rhetoric of both the rioters and the authorities. The Commander-in-Chief's reports of volunteers' efforts to quell the riots, the trial notes, letters from missionaries stationed in St. Vincent

(34) Woodville Marshall, '"Vox Populi": The St Vincent Riots and Disturbances of 1862', in Barry Higman (ed.), Trade, Government and Society in Caribbean History (Kingston, 1983), pp. 90, 91; WMMS Box 229, File 1862: no. 85, Trotman to General Secretaries, 24 October 1862; no. 86, Greathead to General Secretaries, 24 October 1862.

(35) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 126, 8 May 1863, Synopsis of convictions and sentences of prisoners on the occasion of the riots.

and the Lieutenant-Governor's reports clearly reveal the actions and rhetoric of the authorities and also describe how the rioters' actions were perceived. There are less testimonies available to give the labourers' sentiments. However, the letter from the Mount Bentwick protesters, the statements of labourers from Colonaire to a bench of magistrates, who were commissioned with investigating the causes of the riots, and the affidavits of witnesses and victims of assaults committed against labourers show some of the labourers' views. There was also an overwhelming silence of many of the participants of the riots, and a refusal to explain or mitigate their actions. In many ways, this silence was the most eloquent testimony of alienation and distress.

The targets of the rioters also help reveal their primary objectives. During 29 and 30 September, managers' houses on eleven estates were attacked, five managers were beaten, and five stores were looted. On 1 October, there were also attacks against two estates, Carapan and Mount Pleasant. On all but two of these estates, wages had been reduced and privileges had been stopped.

The first scenes of riot took place in the Colonaire district, a few miles south of George Town on 29 September. Six estates were attacked and four men were beaten. The riots began on North Union estate, where the overseer, James Craigan was beaten, and his house and the house of another overseer were broken into and looted. Three men were charged with beating Craigan, and these men, along with six

others and two women, were convicted of stealing from his house.(36)

At South Union, the violence was intense as men and women smashed the contents of two houses and stole clothes and food. Two women were named as being 'prominent' in the destruction of the manager's house, where all the furniture and windows were broken and the contents of the cellar were looted. In all, seven men and five women were tried on this count. The overseer was also beaten by one man.

The events at the overseer's house at Sans Souci reveal the rioters' parameters. Witnesses implied that one woman took control of this attack. She ordered the superintendent to be held and threw a sideboard over the gallery to smash it. It was reported that she also bundled up and stole some belongings. Another woman followed her lead and threw a chair out of the window as well as stealing some fish. The attack on the house was ferocious, and a great deal of strength would have been needed to hurl the furniture about. However, it is striking that the overseer's wife and daughters, although terrified witnesses, were not touched, and the superintendent was not badly hurt. The labourers' anger was focussed on their employers only. Twelve men and two women were convicted for these attacks.

The overseer himself, a coloured man called Charles Rose, was very badly beaten, chopped with a machete about the face and left for dead while he was trying to calm some labourers at New Adelphi estate. Rose was one of the few planters who did not flee immediately from the rioters and

(36) Ibid. The following descriptions of the events of the disturbances were all taken from these trial notes.

was in fact very active in trying to quell the strike and the subsequent riots. At the same time that Rose was beaten, Andrew Cummings, the manager of New Adelphi, was also beaten and chopped. He was thrown into some provision grounds and was protected from further attack by two labourers. His house was also broken into, but again his family was not harmed.

At Adelphi estate, a witness claimed that a woman called Rosey John broke down the door of the overseer's house. Sina Jack led a band of women armed with cutlasses, and there were also bands of armed men. The overseer was threatened but managed to escape. Rioters stole food and clothes and then went into the fields and chased away the indentured African and Indian labourers. Rosey John was not charged, but five men and one woman, Sina Jack, were convicted. The manager, Robert Sayer, was also beaten and his house was looted. Two of the men convicted for these crimes were Quashi John and James Perry. They were both considered ringleaders in the riots, but the evidence against them for events at Adelphi was highly suspect. It was based purely on a prosecution witness who claimed that he had overheard the two men boasting of the assault.

At Colonaire Vale estate, labourers, led by Lavinia Calderia, smashed plates and glasses in the manager's house. Calderia was charged with two men, but was the only one convicted for this raid. Two men were also convicted of breaking into the overseer's house at Mount Greenam, where property was stolen and a lot of damage was perpetrated.

The following day, more estates were attacked south of Biabou, and four Portuguese owned shops in Mesopotamia were also looted. In the shops, wine, salted meat and fish, flour and other goods were taken by large gangs of looters. One shopkeeper claimed that she was held by the hands while her shop was sacked. The attackers were men and women, and the witness claimed that while most of the food was taken away, some pork and rum were simply thrown away. Quaco John was reported to be the leader, and Polly Moore was described as being armed with a heavy stick which she used to smash open the windows. Other looters, blowing conch shells and beating drums, broke into the estate shop at Evesham Vale which was owned by the estate manager. They also raided the Great Houses at Akers Hill and Carapan. In all, ten men and four women were convicted of looting the Portuguese shops and the house at Akers Hill, some of them being convicted on more than one count. Eight men were charged with looting the Evesham Vale shop, one of whom had also been convicted for the same offence at one of the Portuguese shops. Five men and three women were convicted of the attack at Carapan estate, and five men and five women were convicted for sacking Calder House estate.

At Argyll estate, there was more violence. A blacksmith was beaten, and the Great House, home to David Cowie, was plundered by gangs of labourers who had organised themselves into three divisions. Here the destruction was intense and included the killing of Cowie's pet dog. One witness claimed that the divisions included one company made up of only women, and that they were all from the villages

near by, not the estate. Fox Archibald was described as the leader, and, according to the witness, he killed the dog. Eight men were tried for this raid, but, despite the presence of women rioters, no females were charged.

Labourers' statements made during the riots may help to determine their motivations. The clearest statements can be found in the letter handed to Musgrave when he visited George Town. This letter states four main grievances. Firstly, allowances of sugar and rum were stopped without notice. Secondly, provision grounds were cleared by the overseer and manager. Thirdly, the manager refused to pay any wages to workers who gave notice to quit the estate and, fourthly, workers were assaulted and threatened by the police. The letter illustrates how labourers perceived the authorities as potentially violent. In the letter, they also claimed that the inspector told them 'he will give two hours for to consider, and when he returns he will burn down every house, shoot right and left, and take off the head of every woman and child, and thereupon, we are determined that our heads must be off for our rights'.⁽³⁷⁾

These same themes occur in lists of grievances given by labourers of Colonairie Vale, who were the only labourers that responded to the bench of magistrates' call for evidence in the aftermath of the riots. About fifty men and women attended the meeting held by the magistrates. Again the main complaints were that their privileges of sugar, molasses and sweet drinks had been stopped and that their

(37) The letter, signed 'Vox Populi' can be seen in full in the appendix.

wages had been reduced. They also complained that deductions were sometimes unfairly made from their wages and the tasks had increased. Moreover, on some estates their wages were irregularly paid, and on one estate they had worked for a year without wages and the planter had since died insolvent. Other complaints were about the treatment they received from planters and stipendiary magistrates. They claimed that planters used coarse language toward them, were harsh and treated them 'like brutes'. (38)

During the riots also, certain statements attributed to labourers reveal their grievances. In Adelphi, Colonaire and Argyll, labourers were quoted as saying that they wished to get hold of Cowie as he had stopped their allowances. At Adelphi, labourers were reported as saying that Cowie 'knew what he would have got if he had remained'. At Colonaire, they reputedly said they wanted to 'mash up' Cowie and, on Argyll, they threatened to 'break every damn thing' in his house and stated that Cowie had stopped all their allowances.(39) Cowie was the attorney who was rumoured to have made a bet with the Lieutenant-Governor that he could reduce the labourers' wages from eight to four pence a day. This may explain the labourers' hatred for him. Cowie himself fled the island at the time of the riots at Mount Bentwick. He told Governor General Walker that he believed the labourers had assumed 'an organised and defiant

(38) CO 260/98, Walker to Newcastle, no. 69, 11 October 1862, Musgrave to Walker, 7 October 1862.

(39) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 126, 8 May 1863, Synopsis of convictions and sentences of prisoners on the occasion of the riots.

attitude'. Cowie's escape and the hatred generated towards him suggest that his management practices were responsible for much of the unrest in the estates along the windward coast. It is also significant that ten years later, managers on one of Cowie's estates were convicted of assaulting indentured Indian labourers.(40)

The attacks on the Portuguese shops also reveal some of the labourers' grievances. Polly Moore told the crowd to attack the shops because 'they came to work not to keep shop'. When Portuguese immigrants had first arrived in St. Vincent as impoverished labourers, African-Caribbean workers had been praised for treating them with great kindness. The Portuguese had been given food, clothes and help with their provision grounds. Creole labourers may have believed that this kindness had not been repaid and felt exploited by the prices charged in Portuguese-owned shops. Sharpe, the Chief Justice, claimed that African-Caribbean labourers felt a 'morbid jealousy' towards the Portuguese.(41)

However, despite the antagonism between the two groups, labourers did not assault the Portuguese. In fact, Gonsalves, the owner of a George Town bar raided by Bascombe, stated that the rioters did not harm him because he had a family. Gonsalves claimed that Bascombe told him

(40) CO 260/98, Walker to Newcastle, no. 67, 25 September 1862. See also chapter 5, p. 187.

(41) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 126, 8 May 1863, Synopsis of convictions and sentences of prisoners on the occasion of the riots; St. Vincent Court House, Grand Sessions Note Book, 1846-1859, 3 November 1846, Address by the Chief Justice; CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 89, 1 January 1863, Chief Justice Sharpe to Musgrave, 23 December 1862.

'he not sorry if he kill me now, but he would be sorry for the little girl ... who if he kill me would be left without her daddy'. As he left the shop, Bascombe added, 'I am sorry, I not kill you now'.⁽⁴²⁾

Throughout the confrontation, the main targets for the labourers were the estate managers. The riots had been an attempt to re-establish privileges and expose unfair treatment that they had received. George Bascombe claimed that they only wanted their old wage rate, and that he 'did not realise that things would have gone so far'.⁽⁴³⁾

This statement contradicts the claims made by the Chief Justice that labourers were set on a race war. Rose also claimed that Perry told his followers that 'he was out for war, and he was going to Mount Bentwick for war' and that there were ten blacks to every one white and now was the time for the people to 'have the island' as the whites had controlled it long enough. Bascombe was also quoted as demanding 'St. Domingo' law.⁽⁴⁴⁾ As similar statements to these were attributed to rioting labourers throughout the Caribbean during this period, it is impossible to determine if these were actual or imagined threats. Certainly, labourers wanted to restructure labour practices and improve conditions for the African-Caribbean labour force, but there

(42) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 126, 8 May 1863, Synopsis of convictions and sentences of prisoners on the occasion of the riots.

(43) Ibid.

(44) CO 260/99, Governor-General Walker to Newcastle, no. 89, 1 January 1863, Chief Justice Sharpe to Musgrave, 23 December 1862.

is no evidence to suggest that they attempted to arm themselves to overthrow the authorities.

Another perceived threat was that rioters were bent on raping white women. Reverend Greathead claimed that the labourers of Mount Bentwick were intent on killing all white men and saving the 'ladies to be their wives'. Therefore, all the white women in George Town were sent off to Kingstown by boat. This was again a common fear in the Caribbean. For example, it was claimed that the rioters in Tortola had threatened a similar act. During the apprenticeship period, it was also claimed that apprentices were planning to kill all the white men and keep the white women as their wives.⁽⁴⁵⁾ In fact, these claims ignored the realities that many of the rioters were themselves women, and white women who remained on estates during the riots were not harmed. In the trials, one man was charged with intent to rape, but this case did not appear in the court notes sent to the Colonial Office, or in the court note book located at the Court House in St. Vincent, so it was probably dropped.⁽⁴⁶⁾

These reports of demands for St. Domingo law and the rape of white women may not reveal the true intentions of the rioters, but they explain the excessive use of violence as planters quelled the riots during the 'war' phase. The

(45) WMS Box 229, File 1862, no. 86, Greathead to General Secretaries, 24 October 1862; The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser 1 October 1853; CO 261/15, Glenelg to Smith, 30 September 1836, no. 43.

(46) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 89, 1 January 1863, Court of the Grand Sessions, Sub-enclosure 3.

true extent of this violence was covered up by authorities, and rumours and claims of brutalities were denied. Reports sent to the Lieutenant-Governor by the commanding officer of the local militia, however, indicate that the force used by the volunteers far exceeded the resistance shown. What is also clear from the reports of the riots is that both labourers and planters expected violence.

The militia only encountered resistance on 1 October, when they clashed with rioters at Carapan. The rioters dispersed but four men were killed. One, Jacob Joe, was killed during the riot. Two more, Peter Antoine and John Hercules were shot dead while running away and the fourth, Peter Peters, was stabbed while hiding under a bed. Several men were also badly wounded, including Joe Hercules, who was shot in the eye and Ned Hercules, Warren Joseph and Robert Tashe who all received sword cuts to the head.(47)

In their reports to Governor-General Walker, both Musgrave and Stewart mentioned the enraged feelings of the volunteer forces. Musgrave felt hampered by the 'well meant but misdirected zeal of persons willing to render assistance but very indiscreet in their mode of doing so'. Stewart claimed that as many of his force were made up of people who had been assaulted or whose property had been taken by the rioters, they were naturally 'excitable'.(48) This was

(47) CO 260/98, Walker to Newcastle: no. 67, 11 October 1862, Musgrave to Walker, 7 October 1862; no. 95, 24 January 1863. Musgrave to Walker 8 December 1862.

(48) CO 260/98, Governor-General Walker to Newcastle, no. 67, 11 October 1862, Musgrave to Walker, 7 October 1862; CO 260/100, Walker to Newcastle, no. 134, 21 May 1862, Stewart to Musgrave 11 May 1863.

certainly an understatement. Peters was chased by three men into a house, and one of them stabbed him while he hid under the bed. The men claimed that they simply used their bayonets to feel under the bed to ascertain if Peters was there. However, when they pulled him out, his entrails were described as falling out of the wound, yet two of the men, one of whom was a doctor, continued to treat him roughly. He died in great pain later that evening, but no one was charged with his death.⁽⁴⁹⁾ In addition, Peter Caruth, the planter who was accused of chopping an unarmed man on the head, wrote in mitigation:

'I consider and considered during Martial Law, that I had a right to give any Rioter a "claught on the head" who attempted after being arrested to break the same'.⁽⁵⁰⁾

In his letter describing his part in the protests, Reverend John Greathead also reveals the excitement experienced by many European men. When he heard that rioters at Argyll had decided to march to Kingstown and George Town, he elicited the help of the magistrate, Alexander Cummings, and organised a force of special constables. He then rode to where the rioters were and,

(49) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 124, 6 May 1863, Evidence of Police Inspector Hobson, 10 April 1863;.

(50) CO 260/100, Walker to Newcastle, no. 129, 13 May 1863, Caruth to Colonial Secretary, 28 April 1863. In fact, it was likely that the man injured had not been in any way involved in the riots, but was simply walking from his provision grounds as Caruth rode by. Witnesses stated that he was a church beadle and was returning from church when he was attacked.

when they told him they planned to destroy George Town, he claimed that he looked at them and said, 'Well, we shall see about that. Try if you dare!' He then galloped back to George Town, put all the white women on a boat to sail to Kingstown and set the church bells ringing. The rioters turned back from George Town when they saw Greathead's armed volunteers.

This victory further fired Greathead, and he then rode all night to Kingstown to report to the Lieutenant-Governor. On his return to George Town he met a planter who was hiding in the bushes. Greathead ordered him to 'come out like a man and push his way to Kingstown'. When he met more rioters on the road to George Town, Greathead claimed that he rode up to them and told them to 'take his head' if they wanted it. Greathead equated manliness with bravado and was convinced that he was in the right. He referred to the rioters, many of whom would have been members of his Church, as 'the enemy'. These beliefs were not lost on many of the people of George Town, who refused after the riots to associate with Greathead. By November, he could not raise enough donations from his members even to keep himself and his family in food. Nearly 280 members left the George Town circuit and within six months Greathead had been relocated to Demerara.⁽⁵¹⁾

In Union island, there were also reports of rioting, and Police Magistrate Albert Lewis was sent to deal with it.

(51) WMMS Box 229, File 1862: no. 86, Greathead to General Secretaries, 24 October 1862; no. 95, Barratt to General Secretaries, 12 November 1862; WMMS Box 229, File 1863: no. 52, Barratt to General Secretaries, 10 June 1863; no. 22, Trotman to General Secretaries, 20 March 1863.

The rioters may have been influenced by the protests on the mainland, but their actions were also sparked by the conduct of the plantation manager who had refused to pay his workers all the wages due to them. A crowd of thirty to forty men and women were accused of throwing stones at the estate manager and threatening his life. Lewis believed that the reports were exaggerated, but he had three men tied to trees in the village and publicly flogged. He wrote: 'This mode of summary punishment I am persuaded has had, and is likely to produce for years to come the most salutary effect. The people are entirely subdued'. Governor-General Walker expressed his concern that floggings without a trial were allowed in this manner, but Lewis remained a police magistrate and was not disciplined in any way. The fact that Lewis felt authorised to publicly and unlawfully flog these men exposes the attitudes of the police authorities towards labourers and further illuminates the social divides within the island.(52)

During their search for rioters along the windward coast, the militia chained suspected participants and marched them to George Town. There were reports of vicious floggings during this 'forced march' from Calliaqua to Mount Bentwick. It was asserted in letters to The Anti-Slavery Society Reporter that both men and women were flogged, and that John Hercules' sisters were taken into a field and told they would be shot when they tried to claim his body. Musgrave denied these allegations and dismissed the letters

(52) CO 260/98, Walker to Newcastle, no. 70, 20 October 1862, Lewis to Musgrave, 12 October 1862.

as being from William Smith, a planter renowned for being a trouble-maker and agitator. However, Musgrave admitted that there had been one flogging as a summary punishment during the forced march, but he maintained that it had been at the insistence of the prisoner's mother who wanted her son released. Furthermore, Musgrave also admitted, after the reports appeared in the Anti-Slavery Society newspaper, that 'unruly' prisoners had also been flogged during the forced march. This suggests that some of the reports of cruelty were credible.(53)

The termination of the riots resulted in the arrest of 246 people and the eventual convictions of over 120 of them.(54) There is no indication why certain people were released and others faced trial. Certainly, at the time of the trials, the authorities were keen to exact revenge and make examples of some of the rioters. This was especially noticeable when the trial opened, as the Chief Justice claimed that the rioters' intentions were 'a purpose which no honest man or well wisher to the island's prosperity can sufficiently rebrobate. I mean the open and avowed purpose of compelling the Proprietary body to continue certain allowances to the labourers'. The jury replied that they hoped that those who were sentenced would receive hard labour 'so that the heavy expense attending the carrying out of their sentences may not be altogether lost'.(55)

(53) CO 260/101, Walker to Newcastle, no. 170, 3 October 1863, Musgrave to Walker, 8 September 1863.

(54) Marshall, 'Vox Populi' p. 102.

(55) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 89, 1 January 1863, Court of the Grand Sessions, Sub-enclosure 3.

It is probable that those that were convicted during the trials may not have been guilty of the crimes for which they were sentenced. Many more people were named by the witnesses than were tried and, in fact, some of the witnesses also admitted to having taken part in the looting. Also, while there were reports of 'excesses' at Mount Pleasant on 1 October, no one was convicted for any crimes there. Only three men were charged with offences that took place on both 29 and 30 September, and only James Perry was implicated in the riots at Mount Bentwick and the later riots along the windward coast. It is noticeable, however, that several of the prisoners shared surnames, so authorities may have taken advantage of the trials to remove problem families. This may also explain the violence against certain rioters. For example, in addition to the death of John Hercules, one other member of the Hercules family was shot and another was cut with a sword. The Hercules family owned land in Victoria and Stubb's villages.⁽⁵⁶⁾

Only men were charged with personal assaults. This may have been because women were less disposed to violence, but the descriptions of Sina Jack armed with a cutlass, Polly Moore smashing windows with her heavy stick and Angelique Primus and Mopsey Job hurling furniture out of windows and galleries refute this notion. It is more likely that concepts of masculinity and femininity influenced the court proceedings. When sentencing the women who were involved in

(56) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 95, 24 January 1863, Sutherland to Musgrave, 31 December 1862. See the appendix for the sentences passed during the riots.

the looting of the Portuguese shops, the Attorney General, Charles Stewart, (who had been commanding officer of the militia) and the Chief Justice, Henry Sharpe entered into the following discussion on the issue of female participation.

Attorney General: It unhappily happened that the female convicts had been great participants in many of the outrages that the court has had to try, .. but if the court saw any circumstances in their cases which it might be disposed to view as indicative of a less hardened nature than that which the other prisoners had exhibited it would be very gratifying to me to promote the views of the court if the court would be lenient in its sentences.

The Chief Justice replied : You have very much relieved me. I have felt some difficulty in dealing with the cases of the female convicts. There are peculiarities in their cases which entitle them to some mercy. Here they are so peculiarly excitable, so often led into vicious habits by the men, that I am inclined to consider them less hardened in crime; that mild sentences, if any are passed, may be so tempered by mercy as to reclaim them more easily. Besides which many of them are mothers with young children who by the loss of their mothers are thrown upon the world destitute: and I cannot overlook the fact that the Gaol accommodation in the female ward is very limited, that the addition of even three adds

greatly to personal inconvenience to the other unfortunate inmates. Venus Fraser, Polly Moore and Francinette Noel are, I am afraid to say offenders of the first class in the commission of many of the larcenies.(57)

The majority of women charged in the riots received either fines or were bound over. This decision was not unique. In 1847 when a husband and wife were jointly accused of larceny, Sharpe declared:

It is one of the merciful principles of the law under which we live that those persons who have no mental will in the perpetration of an offence are protected from punishment as well as those that commit crimes while in the subjection to the power of others. A wife is therefore protected from the consequences of misconduct from the presumed coercion of the husband.(58)

In this way, the legal authorities minimised the concerns and convictions of the women rioters, trivialising them as 'excitable' rather than angry and frustrated. While this relieved women from heavy jail sentences, it also ensured that planters and government authorities did not have to address the issues of poverty and discrimination that women rioters had attempted to highlight. In addition, those who had participated in putting down the riots wanted

(57) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 126, 8 May 1863, Synopsis of convictions and sentences of prisoners on the occasion of the riots.

(58) St. Vincent Court of Grand Sessions Note Book, 1846-1859, 2 February 1847.

to believe that they all 'acted like a man'. The cavalry, who had galloped through the crowds with their swords drawn (albeit sometimes on mules rather than horseback), did not want to be reminded that the crowds that they feared included 'mothers with young children'. The participation of women rioters was therefore minimised.

The trial judge and the bench of magistrates complained of the sullen silence of labourers after the riots, and their refusal to explain their participation.⁽⁵⁹⁾ This silence indicates the disappointment and resentment that labourers experienced.

A large crowd of mainly women and children created angry scenes during the first public floggings of the forty-eight men sentenced to receive thirty-nine lashes. After that, the island experienced an atmosphere of hostility and resentment. Planters destroyed many houses of village residents implicated in the riots and confiscated their livestock. They also used the atmosphere of unrest to victimise families that they held grudges against. The Wilderness chapel was also destroyed.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Missionaries found their congregations reduced and their members were less willing to donate funds or even pay their membership dues. Fly sheets appeared accusing influential men such as James Choppin, the attorney general, and Van Heyninger, of

(59) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 89, 1 January 1863: Bench of Magistrates' report, 18 December 1862; Chief Justice Sharpe to Musgrave, 23 December 1862.

(60) CO 260/98, Walker to Newcastle: no. 88, 28 December 1862, Musgrave to Walker 23 December 1862; no. 69, 11 October 1862, Musgrave to Walker, 7 October 1862, Stewart to Musgrave, 6 October 1862; WMMS Box 229, File 1862, no. 85, Trotman to General Secretaries, 24 October 1862.

atrocities. Barratt wrote that the 'colour question' had been revived and that planters were 'bitterly denounced by the blacks as a class,' and that 'this feeling is being repaid with interest by the whites and coloureds'.(61)

The hostility continued long after the riots had terminated. By the following summer, many residents of the windward district had migrated to other islands as planters refused to employ them. Others, including Plato Chance and Joseph Agall, both village residents who had been wounded by the militia, left to escape further reprisals. James Perry and Quaco John were also able to escape from prison and fled to Trinidad. Perry was caught returning to St. Vincent in March 1865 and was severely flogged.(62) Seven estates near George Town were abandoned, and labourers near Layou did not receive any wages for more than three months. In order to relieve some of the acrimony, Musgrave repealed the sentences for further floggings in March 1863 and released all but eight of the rioters on the Queen's birthday the following year. In September 1864, as a welcoming gesture, the new Lieutenant-Governor freed all the remaining prisoners except one. This was Simon Hill, who tried separately from the other prisoners, was sentenced to two years imprisonment and was seen as 'highly criminal before

(61) WMMS Box 229, File 1862: no. 92, Barratt to General Secretaries, 7 November 1862; no. 95, Barratt to General Secretaries, 12 November 1862.

(62) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle: no. 111, 2 March 1863, Musgrave to Walker, 5 February 1863; no. 95, 24 January 1863, Musgrave to Walker, 8 December 1862; The St. Vincent Guardian and Government Gazette, 25 March 1865.

and at the riots'.⁽⁶³⁾ There are no other details of his case either in the Colonial Office reports or the court note books. Perry was released from prison in December 1866, but was exiled to Trinidad and told never to return to St. Vincent.⁽⁶⁴⁾

Crime also increased after the 1862 riots. Newspapers reported that bands of Barbadian labourers, no longer employed on the estates, were ambushing travellers to rob them. In addition, the jail population increased as those accused of petty crimes were no longer able to pay fines and chose jail sentences as an alternative. Lieutenant-Governor Berkley observed that 'the minds of the peasantry have become unsettled, ... cane stealing and other petty offences become more frequent' as a result of the rioting. The suppression of the riots also resulted in more covert means of protest. Arson became a major problem again on estates along the windward coast.

In 1865, Jamaican labourers revolted against similar grievances of poverty and planter oppression. The Morant Bay uprising was on a far larger scale than the riots of St. Vincent, and the Jamaican authorities, led by Governor Eyre, had access to both heavily armed British troops and highly trained Maroon soldiers. The violence of the uprising and the suppression of the participants were ferocious. The

(63) WMMS Box 229, File 1862, no. 101, Barratt to General Secretaries, 5 December 1862; CO 260/101, Walker to Newcastle, no. 240, 15 June 1864; CO 260/102, Walker to Cardwell: no. 269, 13 September 1864, Sharpe to Walker, 11 September, 1864; no. 274, 30 September 1864, Berkeley to Walker 22 September 1864.

(64) The Witness, 20 December 1866.

repercussions of the events in Jamaica further polarised the two classes in St. Vincent. Missionaries reported that pamphlets containing threats to destroy the planter class were distributed throughout the island. The white and coloured inhabitants, aware of the sympathies expressed by labourers towards their peers in Jamaica, were relieved at the heavy sentences imposed on suspected rioters. They further agreed to pay for British troops to again be stationed on the island to remind Vincentian labourers of the consequences of insurrection.⁽⁶⁵⁾

The rural population of St. Vincent heeded this threat, and despite the increases in poverty and the reduction of employment, they remained primarily non-violent. Their struggle for better conditions did not cease, but their methods changed. In 1865, labourers petitioned the British Government against the actions of a police magistrate who used his position on the Assembly to enforce laws that were 'unfair on the labouring population'. In 1884, several groups of labourers sent petitions to the select Committee investigating poverty in the West Indies. These petitions are indications of the growing literacy and self-autonomy of what Mimi Sheller has described as 'black publics'.⁽⁶⁶⁾

(65) CO 260/104, Walker to Carnarvon, no. 401, 11 August 1866, Berkley's report accompanying the Blue Book; WMMS Box 230, File 1866, no. 2, Shrewsbury to General Secretaries, 6. January 1866.

(66) CO 260/193, Walker to Cardwell, no. 304, 30 March 1865, Petition from London Thomas on behalf of the labouring population; PP 1884, (3840-1) xlvi, Petitions from F. Othello, Goodluck Clarke, Walter Stapleton, pp. 118-125; These petitions can be seen in full in the appendix; Mimi Sheller, 'Peasants and Politics in Post-Emancipation Haiti and Jamaica' paper presented to the SCS conference, Hull, 1997.

However, labourers in St. Vincent were precluded from the 'rights and privileges' that the freed slaves had promised themselves. The language of the 1884 petitions reveal the distressing conditions of many Vincentian labourers and contrasts vividly with the freed slaves confident songs of their aspirations. F. Othello and three other labourers begged the Select Committee: 'as an ignorant people, we hope we have not ventured what might cause you displeasure, but trust that at a convenient time, you might give the native labourers of St. Vincent a consideration which might probably benefit them'.(67)

Conclusion.

Labourers used a variety of means to protest against their low wages and poor working conditions. However, the success of their actions often depended on external forces. The strikes of 1848 and 1854 were effective because planters continued to rely heavily on the creole labour force. In addition, the strikers gained some support and mediation from missionaries and the Lieutenant-Governors because their actions were mainly non-violent. However, the rioting that unfolded after the initial strike action on Mount Bentwick angered and frightened the authorities sufficiently to ensure reprisals. Furthermore, the increase in immigrant labourers and the abandonment of several estates meant that creole labourers were no longer so heavily in demand.

The direct action used by labourers reveals their frustrations as their aspirations for 'freedom' were eroded.

(67) PP 1884 (3840-1) xlv1, p. 118.

Their standard of living declined dramatically during the 1850 and 1860s, and by the 1880s, large numbers of creole labourers were destitute. Women took leading roles in direct action, because many had additional burdens of feeding and caring for children. In addition, they may have believed that government authorities were less likely to inflict heavy punishments on them. Certainly, they received more lenient sentences in the courts, although rumours of atrocities committed against male and female prisoners during the march to Mount Bentwick echo, although in a very reduced form, the violence forced on Jamaican women after the Morant Bay uprising.⁽⁶⁸⁾

The repression of the riots on the estates contrasts with the laxity of police action during the urban protests in the 1850s and early 1860s. White and coloured men united to suppress black labourers' protests because labourers' rights were seen as a direct threat to the peace and stability of the island. Once again, the anger of labourers was described as 'evil passions', and the rioters were seen as 'wicked and designing people'.⁽⁶⁹⁾ It was believed that labourers were no longer 'under the wholesome restraint which formerly controlled them, by the influence of a wealthy and respectable proprietary body' and that workers

(68) Thompson has suggested that these were also motivations for English women rioters. See Thompson, 'The Moral Economy' pp.115-116. For details of the punishments faced by women in Jamaica, see Heuman, 'The Killing Time' pp. 119, 136, 139,

(69) CO 260/99, Governor-General Walker to Newcastle, no. 89, 1 January 1863, Bench of Magistrates' report, 18 December 1862; CO 260/99, Governor-General Walker to Newcastle, no. 89, 1 January 1863, Court of the Grand Sessions, Sub-enclosure 3, Address by the Chief Justice to the jury.

had lost 'the control, moral as well as physical to which they were formerly subject'. The authorities wanted the people to be 'entirely subdued'.⁽⁷⁰⁾ Planters continued to expend large sums on importing Indian labourers, while creoles were forced to migrate to find work elsewhere. Decreased wages and reduced privileges however, did not save the sugar industry from collapse.

The petitions of 1865 and 1884 indicate the increased education and political awareness of the labourers. It was clear to the petition organisers that violence alienated them from the authorities. While the 1865 petition was dismissed by Musgrave as the work of a trouble-maker, the 1884 letters assisted in changing the Colonial authorities attitudes towards land ownership. Although the land settlement schemes that followed at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, were not total success, they did enable much greater numbers of Vincentian families to achieve some independence and financial autonomy.⁽⁷¹⁾

(70) CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 89, 1 January 1863, Court of the Grand Sessions, Sub-enclosure 3; Musgrave to Walker, 24 December 1862; CO 260/99, Walker to Newcastle, no. 89, 1 January 1863, Bench of Magistrates' report, 18 December 1862; CO 260/98, Walker to Newcastle, no. 70, 20 October 1862, Musgrave to Walker, 12 October 1862.

(71) For details on land settlement after 1884, see Janet Momsen, 'Land Settlement as an Imposed Solution' in Jean Besson and Janet Momsen (eds.), Land and Development in the Caribbean (London, 1987), pp. 49-53.

Conclusion.

This thesis has discussed the consequences of the economic collapse of St. Vincent on the lives of the inhabitants. The first fifty years of freedom heralded a great deal of change in the lives of men and women in St. Vincent and the wider Caribbean. Immediately after emancipation, many women quit full time estate work but, instead of entering into the domestic spheres advocated by missionaries, they demonstrated an entrepreneurial spirit. Drawing on skills inherited from their African and slave forebears, many Caribbean women became proficient market gardeners, retailers and exporters. In order to utilise these skills, they needed access to land. Residency regulations on estates aimed at limiting entitlements to provision grounds to the families of those working on the estates. Therefore, women without husbands or other male household members employed on the plantations could only have access to these lands by working as estate labourers.

This movement by women has not been sufficiently incorporated into debates on the withdrawal of labour. It can be argued that the 'pull' factor, the desire to forget the indignities of slavery and forge new, independent lifestyles, was experienced primarily by women; while the 'push' factor, instigated by low wages and restrictive tenancy agreements, was the reason why many men chose to quit Vincentian estates several years later. In fact, the male withdrawal of labour also included large numbers of men who migrated to Trinidad and British Guiana to work on the sugar

estates there. Motivated by the promise of higher wages and the large tracts of cheap land available in these colonies, Vincentian men also demonstrated ambition and innovation in their quest to utilise their status as free men. However, as the migration of males became common, more women were forced back into estate work in order to feed themselves and their families.

Childhood also changed during the period studied. During apprenticeship and the early years of emancipation, parents were determined that their children should not suffer the same harsh working conditions that slave children had endured. For almost a decade, large numbers of children experienced freedom from plantation labour and attended schools or worked for their parents. Again, this withdrawal from labour needs to be included in considerations of the decreased labour force after emancipation. However, children of later generations did not experience this opportunity. Child labour was again common in the 1870s and 1880s, as families used every avenue open to them to bring some wages into their households. Samuel Smith, writing about his own experiences in Antigua at the end of the nineteenth century, claimed that parents would send their children to work on the estates as soon as they could pass as being old enough.⁽¹⁾

Working conditions on estates deteriorated for labourers during the period covered in this study. Wages

(1) Keithlyn B. Smith and Fernando C. Smith, (eds) To Shoot Hard Labour: The Life and Times of Samuel Smith, an Antiquan Working Man (Scarborough, 1986) p. 38.

decreased as did employment opportunities. Labourers did not accept worsening conditions passively and frequently used strikes and other forms of protest. Women were at the forefront of these disputes. Many led gangs of labourers on protest marches and exhibited a lack of fear and respect towards the authorities. Like slave women before them, Vincentian women presented a 'fighting spirit' when facing injustice and protecting their families' livelihood.(2)

Despite the actions of the planter class, the brutal suppression of the 1862 riots and the increase in poverty, freed labourers never lost sight of their determination to achieve full 'rights and privileges'. Lack of employment meant that strike action was no longer possible after 1862, so labourers resorted to other means to improve their lives. The petitions sent to the British Parliament Select Committees which were published in 1884 and 1898 reveal the continued aspirations of Vincentian labourers to become independent freeholders. They further show that despite abject poverty, Vincentian labourers of the 1880s and 1890s retained the same goals as their parents and grandparents and possessed a sense of anger and determination to improve their conditions.

Immigration further worsened the plight of creole labourers. Labourers from India arrived as the sugar industry in St. Vincent was deteriorating. As a result, they took work from creole families rather than providing additional labour. Lack of work in the 1870s and 1880s

(2) Barbara Bush, Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838 (London, 1990) p. 162.

became critical and pushed people into a state of 'bewilderment and completely paralysed their energies'.(3)

Immigration was just one example of planters' actions to restrict both free and indentured labourers' lives. Instances of cruelty and indifference by managers were common. For example, James McFie virtually starved his Portuguese labourers; Samuel Parsons beat the indentured Indians workers on his estate; Charles Austin's high-handed manner resulted in the Mount Bentwick strikes; Robert Chapman tried to cheat his labourers out of their crop bonus; and David Cowie and James Porter were both so unpopular with their employees that, on different occasions, they fled the island. The support that these men received from both their fellow planters and often from the Colonial authorities on the island would suggest that their actions were neither unusual nor considered unduly harsh.(4)

In the 1840s, stipendiary magistrates noted that the acquisition of land was the burning ambition of most freed labourers. This is also further revealed by the willingness of labourers to buy even small plots at very inflated prices. However, the small number of people that actually achieved this goal indicates the determination of the planter class to restrict the independence of labourers. This was especially noticeable after the early 1860s, when the estates became monopolised by a small number of merchant groups and planter families. Companies like D.K. Porter had

(3) WMMS Synod Minutes, Box 165, St. Vincent Minutes, 1881, Report from the George Town Circuit.

(4) See pages 182, 187, 356, 360, 364, 373.

a devastating effect on the well-being and economic improvement of the poor. Porter's unwillingness to invest any of his profits in the improvement of either his estates or the island as a whole was an indication of his lack of commitment to the island's prosperity, and his view of his estates there as only short-term investments.

Limited access to land, low wages and the continued and often hostile control of the predominantly European plantation managers over the legislature and judiciary ensured that freed slaves did not fully achieve the 'rights and privileges' they sought. With little assistance from Colonial authorities, stipendiary magistrates or missionaries, labourers attempted to negotiate working and living conditions on the estates, form new communities in free villages, and retain control over their cultural and religious lives. However, after a brief spell of prosperity in the 1840s, they had little control over their economic lives. Even their initial success as arrowroot producers was overturned when planters flooded the market with their own crops, causing the price to crash.

Yet, freed slaves exerted considerable control in their pursuit of religious and cultural freedom. Despite considerable opposition, they continued to enjoy masquerading as a form of both entertainment and cultural empowerment. Furthermore, the steady increase in the influence of the 'Shaker' church further indicates the labourers' ability to retain some control over their lives. Although the church was continually harassed by missionaries and Anglicans and one of the chapels was destroyed in 1862,

membership of this sect rose steadily.⁽⁵⁾ The persistence of Shakers and their present-day survival as a strong religious movement is testimony to many Vincentian labourers' determination to retain some autonomy and control over their lives. Women were central to the survival and vitality of the Shaker sect. Their roles as church mothers, preachers and ordinary members ensured that the values of the sect were transmitted to younger generations.

However, women faced considerable opposition in their other attempts to reorganise their lives after emancipation. Although many were able to assume leadership roles during protests and strikes, women were later marginalised. In addition, few became freeholders. Despite early attempts to withdraw from estate work, by the end of the nineteenth century, women had assumed the lowest paid and least skilled work on the estates. Women experienced the main hardships of increasing poverty in St. Vincent. While men could migrate to escape unemployment, women remained in St. Vincent often with children and elderly relatives to care for.

(5) Edward Cox, 'Religious Intolerance and Persecution: The Shakers of St. Vincent, 1900-1934' Journal Of Caribbean History 20 (1985) p. 213.

Appendices

Appendix One

The following letters were written by or on behalf of labourers and other members of the African-Caribbean population of St. Vincent. The first two letters, claiming to be from the labourers of St. George, are likely to have been written by someone else. The language used in the letters, especially the English style of grammar and the phraseology, for example the exclamation 'freemen indeed!' would suggest that the letters were actually written by a Wesleyan missionary on behalf of his congregation.

Letters three and four were from the urban inhabitants of the island and share some common signatures. Letter three complains about Campbell's report on the State of the Island and received an immediate response. Campbell conceded that his report was untactful. The writers of letter four sought to flatter the authorities. Their emphasis on gratitude for the freedom bestowed on blacks was a discourse commonly found in letters extolling the free population to conform to the demands of the planter class. The request within this letter, however, was refused.

The letter signed Vox Populi is arguably the most interesting and revealing. The language employed in the letter suggests that it was written by someone with more than a primary school education. It uses a predominantly British-English style and there are few examples of Vincentian grammar within it. However, the letter contains

sentiments, in particular the threat of insurrection, that would indicate that it was not written by a missionary. It is possible that it was actually penned by Simon Hill, the man who served the longest prison sentence for the riots. However, there is no evidence to support this theory. It is also likely that the letter was written with the assistance of the Mount Bentwick labourers. Within the letter, when details of the treatment that the labourers suffered at the hands of the police and estate managers are described, the letter reveals a more creolised style of English. This suggests that the writer was transcribing and only slightly modifying the words of the labourers themselves.

Letter six, from London Thomas, was also probably written by someone with a good education. In style, it is very similar to the Vox Populi letter. The writers of both letters employed quite long and convoluted sentence patterns. It is possible that these two petitions and the letters presented to the Royal Commission, published in 1884, were written by lawyers or writing clerks and paid for by the petitioners.

The letters selected by the Parliamentary Select Committee of 1884, are also very similar. They stress the same grievances, employing both specific instances of injustices and general statements concerning the labourers' unfair treatment. Furthermore, they all use the same formula for the salutations at the beginning and end of the letters. This suggests that they were written in collaboration.

None of the petitions had any signatures from females. However, the copy of the London Thomas petition only contained only one signature. The signatures that were not included in the copy sent to the Colonial Office may have included women's names since London Thomas' letter was partly written because of the treatment that one woman encountered. It is also possible that women were completely excluded from the whole process of writing and sending these letters because labourers realised that the British Government found women's participation in political processes to be unsuitable. Mimi Sheller's research into petitions sent by Jamaican labourers reveals that women there were often excluded from the petitioning committees, or were placed on peripheral Female and Juvenile committees.

Letter One.

Address from Agricultural Labourers.

Saint Vincent.

To his Excellency Sir George Tyler, Knight of the Royal Hanoverian Guelphic Order, Lieutenant-Governor and Commander-in-Chief, for the time being, in and over the Island of St. Vincent and its dependencies, &c, &c, &c.

The Humble Address of the Agricultural Labourers of the Parish of St. George.

May it Please your Excellency,

We have heard with great sorrow that your Excellency is about to quit this government on leave of absence, and that it is not probable that you will return to the Island.

During your Excellency's administration of the government, a most important change has taken place in our condition, - from a state of slavery have we been exalted to into that of unqualified freedom- from being property of our fellow creatures, we have been elevated to the ranks of freemen - freemen indeed! possessing, as we do now, those rights and privileges of Englishmen which are justly the boast of those who enjoy them, and the admiration and envy of those who possess them not.

Much of the success of this important change is to be attributed to your Excellency's zeal and judgement, and to the confidence we had in you. The trouble your Excellency undertook - the bodily fatigue you endured, in order to

explain to us the change in our condition - and the kind and sound advice which you gave us how to conduct ourselves, so as to shew we were not unworthy of the blessings of freedom, are most gratefully remembered by us. If the free system has not yet worked fully as well as all would wish, we can say that the horrid anticipations of those who were opposed to our being free have been proved utterly unfounded.

The full advantages of a change cannot be expected immediately as that change is effected; the soothing influence of time must interpose, and we hope soon to see the island in as bountiful and luxuriant state of cultivation as it ever has been. But when the short crop of the present year is referred to as evidence of our indolence, your Excellency's experience at once tells you that we are unjustly accused - the seasons are the Lord's, we cannot change them; and to the very unfavourable season just past is to be attributed much of what some would charge us with.

We wish your Excellency to continue to think well of us; we will endeavour to deserve it; and most gratefully will we treasure up the recollections of what your Excellency has done for us. We pray our God that you and your Excellency's family may long enjoy every happiness this world can afford.

We beg your Excellency to present to our most gracious Queen, the accompanying address to Her Majesty, and personally to ensure her Majesty of our loyalty and attachment.

We, the undersigned, deputed by our fellow labourers to present this address to your Excellency, beg to subscribe ourselves,

Your Excellency's most grateful, humble servants,
(Signed) Belford Wilson, William Cummings, John McDowall,
Samuel Israel, William Wilson.

Letter Two.

To Her Most Excellent Majesty the Queen

The Humble Address of the Agricultural Labourers of the
Parish of St. George.

We your humblest, yet loyal subjects, beg to offer our heart congratulations on your Majesty's auspicious marriage with his Royal Highness Prince Albert of Saxe Coburg and Goths. We fervently hope your Majesty may experience every felicity and happiness the married state affords.

Our feelings of loyalty and attachment to your Majesty are not inferior to those entertained by any of your Majesty's subjects. With our lives, were we called upon, would we defend your sovereignty to these Islands, feeling sensibly the high privileges we enjoy under your benignant reign.

Grateful are we for the recent important change effected in our condition - raised as we have been from a degraded state to the rank of freemen. We know that freedom is not idleness, and we hope, when the effects of the recent

unfavourable season shall have passed away, to see our labours crowned with bountiful success.

We thank your Majesty for the protection you have afforded us, and for so long continuing to us our excellent Governor and friend, Sir George Tyler, who, we are sorry to learn, is about to leave us. We doubt not, however, that in selecting another Governor to fill his place, your Majesty will send us one in whom we may place that confidence which he, now about to leave us, undoubtable possesses.

May it please your Majesty to accept this from your humble servants, on behalf of our fellow labourers.

(signed) Belford Wilson, William Cummings, John McDowall, Samuel Israel, William Wilson.

Source: The Royal St. Vincent Gazette and Weekly Advertiser,
9 May 1840.

Letter Three.

Saint Vincent

March 8th 1847.

Sir,

We have been deputed by the Coloured and Black Inhabitants to wait upon your Excellency, for the purpose of drawing your Excellency's attention to certain passages of your General Report, on the State of the Island, transmitted to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, with the Blue Book for 1845.

In these passages of your Excellency's Report, the coloured and black population of this Island consider their character and position to have been hastily and injuriously represented to Her Majesty's Government.

The passages particularly complained of are to be found in pages numbered 64, 72 and 75 in the Report of the Past and Present State of Her Majesty's Colonial Possessions, as presented to both Houses of Parliament.

In the first passage, your Excellency accuses the Negro labourers indiscriminately, as being addicted to the use of ardent spirits, and in your Excellency's answer to Sir Charles Greys, the intemperance of the Negro is dwelt upon, without reference being made to any other class of the labouring population.

In page 72, under the head of Artisans, the character of Native-Artisans only is unfavourably reported.

But what has occasioned considerable excitement, and created general dissatisfaction, is the concluding remarks in your Excellency's Report, wherein your Excellency states "At present few of the coloured class and none of the Negro, are capable of being placed in situations of trust; and there is such a broad line of demarcation widening that of colour between them and the white population, as occasions sentiments of distrust and apprehension in the one hand and feelings of overweening superiority on the other."

The short period which elapsed between your Excellency's arrival and the time of drawing up your Excellency's report, could not, in our opinion have enabled your Excellency to become sufficiently acquainted with the

coloured and black inhabitants to form a correct estimate of their character.

We have no opportunity of ascertaining upon whom your Excellency obtained your information generally, nor how the feelings of overweening superiority on the part of the white population came under your Excellency's notice - but we assure your Excellency that the coloured and black classes, however deficient your Excellency may consider them to be in education and trust, see nothing to distrust, nothing to apprehend in reference to their position relative to the white population. Should sentiments of distrust and apprehension arise, they can only be called forth by such unfavourable reports as those under consideration - reports ostensibly emanating from your Excellency, upon whom the coloured and black population have a right to expect equal participation in the privileges of loyal British Subjects, and protection in their exercise.

Far be it however, for us to accuse your Excellency of having willfully misrepresented the coloured and black population of this Island. But your Excellency's residence among us having been extended to nearly two years, and your Excellency's Report having been published to the World - we deem it necessary to draw your Excellency's attention to a statement made within a very limited period after your Excellency's arrival, a statement which we consider injurious to the position and prospects of the coloured and black inhabitants - and though we do not presume to dictate to your Excellency the course that ought to be pursued, still we confidently expect your Excellency will at the

earliest period, adopt such means to disabuse the minds of our most gracious sovereign and her Ministers, as to enable us to consider that we are in a position to enjoy all civil and political rights, in common with others of Her Majesty's Subjects under your Excellency's Government.

We have the Honour to be, Sir, Your Excellency's most obedient, humble servants.

signed John L. Hazell, Chairman

David C. Da. Costa

George P. Bullock

Abraham Baxter

Abraham Warner

James Lewis

John Gabriel

John Audain

W.A. Mitchell Secretary

R.A. St. Hill

Source: CO 260/67, Reid to Earl Grey, no. 12, 24 March 1847.

Letter Four.

Saint Vincent

To Her Most Gracious Majesty The Queen.

The Very Humble and most respectful Petition of the
Undersigned natives and residents of the said Island most
respectfully Sheweth

That your Most Gracious Majesty's Petitioners humbly
beg leave to be allowed to approach your Majesty's footstool
with the profoundest feelings of Affectionate Loyalty and
zeal for Your Most Gracious Majesty and for the British
Government.

That feeling grateful for the benefits conferred by
your Majesty's Government upon them and upon their race in
the benign blessings they experience and enjoy being the
effect of general emancipation throughout the British West
Indian Colonies - also for the continued efforts made, and
that are daily making by the British Government to suppress
Slavery and put down the Slave trade - Our Grateful Hearts
are Overwhelmed with feelings of emotions too great and too
manifold to express.

That the foreigners lately emancipated are in a good
measure indebted to the wisdom and magnanimity of your
Majesty's Government and to the salutary Wise and benevolent
example set them in the abolition of slavery just
effectuated in the British Colonies and possessions.

That without education and moral and intellectual instruction freedom is almost a nominal good it being the blessing of education that distinguishes man from his fellows of the creation and shews him forth as truly the image of his creator.

That the ignorance and folly into which the lower orders are frequently Hurried and for which they are culpable arises from that state of Criminal Apathy and moral and intellectual degradation into which they are unfortunately placed.

That your Most Gracious Majesty's Petitioners feeling the great want of education and moral instruction so as to qualify them properly to appreciate the blessings of freedom as good subjects and good citizens

Beg leave most humbly and most respectfully to pray your Most Gracious Majesty's and your Most Gracious Majesty's most August Consort Albert's notice to the accompanying Prospectus - and to entreat and pray your Majesty and your Gracious Majesty's August Consort to become Patrons of the Said School and to grant the said school the Aid of your Gracious Majesty and that of the Government.

And your Gracious Majesty's Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray &c &c &c

Members of the Committee

William Clunes Senior Preceptor, Native of the said Island -
Secretary

John Morgan

James Morgan

William Durham

Henry Gill

William Dyer

John Gabrriel

Benjamin Robinson

John Pitt Herbert

Richard Whiskey

Walter Emery

William Taylor

James Crookshank

John Richards

Dennis Crosbie

Abraham Baxter

Names of Adults and Others viz

Andrew Lacriox Wilson

Edward Coventry

Jeremiah McIntosh

John Louis Roeget (?)

Joseph Garroway

Jacob Robinson

C.M.J. Spratt

William Dickinson

Charles Mowah (?)

Samuel Martin

Henry Little

James Caluely

Source: CO 260/68, Reid to Earl Grey, no. 29, 25 August
1848.

Letter Five.

To his Excellency the Governor.

May it please your Excellency,

We the Inhabitants of Mount Bentwick Estate have been monthly employed to work on the above estate some at \$4 others at \$3 & along with our privileges, (viz) our sugar, rum and Provision ground, and we never received any notice that these were to be stopped until when we came to receive them we found that the sugar and rum were stopped, we were all annoyed about it. Mr. Aitken told us that he did not stop them but that he ordered them to be given, we then said that at the expiration of the month we must make other arrangements during which time they went to the mountains and took away our provision ground, that we have worked in our own time, without giving us notice to take out our provision, they have taken it out and both the Manager and overseer are feeding upon Labour; the month is up and they will not pay us our money and we will not work.

We went to the overseer to ask him about our money and privileges and he told us that it was not him who stopped them, that it was James Glasgow the Turnkey. We left him and shortly after he sent for the constable in Georgetown to take us prisoners we refused going and the Constables assaulted us and we resisted them.

Yesterday morning the Inspector of Police marched his men well armed and took up the station before Mr. Aitken's gate and a few minutes after the Inspector and two other gentlemen came to the labourers yard and told us that he had a warrant to arrest a few parties for a riot, we told him no it was nothing of the kind he turn round and ask Bascombe if he would give up himself Bascombe said no, he then said that he will give two hours for us to consider and when he return he will burn down every house, shoot right and left and take off the head of every woman and child and thereupon we are determined that our heads must be off for our rights.

But it may please your Excellency we are quite willing to receive you and to hear your justice on the matter and as her Magesty's subjects we shall listen to you with the greatest patience.

Vox Populi.

CO 260/98 Walker to Newcastle, no. 69, 11 October 1862.

Letter Six.

Unto the Right Honourable Edward Cardwell D C L &c &c Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies

The humble petition of the under signed on behalf of themselves and others located in the Mariaqua Valley in the Island of Saint Vincent sheweth

That your petitioners belong to the labouring class in this colony and suffer great and peculiar hardships at the hands of the Police Magistrates in this Colony, who instead of exclusively devoting their attention to the discharge of their duties, get themselves returned as Members of the Assembly or get seats in the Council, and there frame and enact laws hostile to the interests of your petitioners and subsequently carry them out in a spirit still more hostile than ever the law warrants, thereby entailing much hardship and oppression on your petitioners as individuals and as a class.

That an Act was passed some time since compelling parties to take out Trade licences of Twelve dollars a year. That this Act has been twisted into an engine of oppression by the Police Magistrate of this District Mr. Allan Lewis, formerly a clerk in the Registers Office in this Island, but now an Executive Councillor and organ of the Government in Assembly.

The said Magistrate fined a female labourer under colour of this act for selling a bottle of Molasses, the said Molasses being from canes the growth of land and Manufacture of one of your petitioners - A state of things never contemplated by the Act as every Owner and Manager of Sugar Estates sell and have sold Sugar and Molasses in any quantity without a licence and growers of Arrowroot and every thing else in the nature of produce either Manufactured or raw sell all their property openly in Kingstown to the Speaker of the Assembly and to the father

in law of the said Magistrate and other Merchants without any licence, and without imposition or fine.

That your petitioners are virtually closed against an appeal from the Magistrates to the Supreme Court by the great expense of the same, the influence of the Magistrates with the authorities and the want of confidence in the Bench who generally dismisses Appeals on some technical point, and that they find it useless to petition the local Executive as they find from the Experience of the so called riots and sedition in the year 1862 that the authorities are more ready to shoot and flog and silence the complaints of persons in the class of labourers than to attend to their just Complaints and grant redress.

That one of your petitioners has a family of nine Children, that he pays for the rent of his land 10 dollars per acre and for the manufacture of his sugar eight shillings and 4 pence per barrel. If in addition to this he has to pay a rapacious exaction of 12 dollars to dispose of his produce, it is impossible for him either to support his Children or give them education - That two of the Police Magistrates are Executive Councillors, a third is also a Member of Assembly for his own District and the fourth is a Major of Militia and all are connected with the ruling Class in this Island, and the Majority of them under heavy pecuniary obligations to certain Owners of property here, and indeed owe their very liberty to their forbearance.

Your petitioners therefore pray that you will be pleased to take their case into your favourable consideration and devise some remedy for the hardships they

labour under and that you will be pleased to order that the Police Magistrates will be directed to confine themselves entirely to the duties of their stations, and altogether eschew politics and that such men may be appointed Magistrates as are free from pecuniary obligations to any Class of society, free from connection with the local parties likings and dislikings and can have no motive to harass or oppress your petitioners

And your petitioners as in duty bound shall ever pray

Dated in Saint Vincent March 1 1865

London Thomas

Source: CO 260/103, Walker to Cardwell, no. 304, 30 March 1865.

Letters Seven, Eight and Nine.

From F. Othello, labourer, to Colonel William Crosswell RE
CMG & George Smith Baden Powell Esq.

St. Vincent 10 April 1883

Gentlemen,

The humble petition of the undersigned sheweth,
That they are labourers (planters) who have to find it very difficult to secure work more than three quarters in any year. Your petitioners are not acquainted with any regulations binding them to the estates they work on, but most complain they are sorely oppressed. The miserable wages of 15 cents per day is inadequate to the poorest

requirements and cannot too strongly pray you recommend some reform to improve their circumstances.

As an ignorant people we hope we have not ventured what might caused your displeasure, but trust that at a convenient time you might give to the native labourers of St. Vincent a consideration which might probably benefit them, and as in duty bound will ever pray.

We are etc. Frank Othello and 3 others.

To Colonel William Crosswell RE CMG & George Smith Baden Powell Esq.

St. Vincent 10 April 1883

Gentlemen,

The undersigned, your humble petitioners, beg most respectfully to ask you to interpose to better their circumstances as agricultural labourers.

Your humble petitioners cannot get employment for more than nine months in a year and are miserably paid at the rate of seven pence half penny per day.

The system of stoppage of pay for nothing very often is discouraging to your petitioners, and as a labouring people are fast approaching beggary and are sorely oppressed.

Your petitioners are willing to work, are willing to better their condition, but since the introduction of Indian labourers, they are unfairly dealt with, and have no protection even before some of the police magistrates.

Should your petitioners rent a spot of land from an estate and the produce don't meet the amount for the rent, they are subject to the severest treatment.

Your petitioners earnestly beg their circumstances be considered, and recommend some measure that may improve their lamentable condition and as in duty bound will ever pray.

We are etc

Goodluck Clark and 2 others.

To Colonel William Crosswell RE CMG & George Smith Baden Powell Esq.

St. Vincent 12 April 1883

Gentlemen

The humble petition of the undersigned most respectfully sheweth,

That he is a tenant of 12 acres of crown land situate (sic) in Cumberland Valley, St. David's parish, for which he is paying L10. 8s 4d sterling, and the difficulty to work the said land is very great, the return for the labour and outlay is inadequate, and therefore beg of you gentlemen to recommend the quick disposal of the Crown lands in this colony that its poor may find work to keep them from pecuniary distress and improve their condition.

Your humble petitioner is prepared to purchase the 12 ares of land he occupies as tenant; and a great blessing it would be to the poor of Saint Vincent, who are not cared for and oppressed with the hand of vengeance.

May your return home be pleasant, and the blessings of the
poor of Saint Vincent rest with you.

And as in duty bound will ever pray,

I am etc.

Walter Stapleton.

Source: PP, 1884, (3840-1) xlvii pp. 118-126.

Appendix Two.

The information on the table that follows was copied from the Estates Book, a small, hand written note-book, which is now in the possession of Dr. Earl Kirby, of St. Vincent. The note-book lists all the estates in the island, their labour forces for most years from 1828 to 1853 and their annual sugar production. It also contains the total number of labourers for each parish as well as a total for the whole island. There are no indications within the book to suggest who originally compiled the figures, and there are no means of ascertaining the book's accuracy. However, the figures for 1834 are similar to those given in the Returns of Slaves. Furthermore, the totals for 1839 are comparable to those reported by stipendiary magistrates in the Colonial dispatches. However, the totals for later years are far lower than those reported in the Stipendiary Magistrates' Returns for 1846-1852. Therefore, these figures should not be interpreted as accurate data on the numbers of labourers, but rather as an indication of the general trend of labour withdrawal. The table shows that after a sharp fall in the number of labourers between 1834 and 1839, many estates experienced a gradual decrease in their labour force, although occasionally they would gain additional workers. The figures for Belmont estate, which was owned by John Pemberton Ross, a police magistrate, end in 1845 as the estate went out of cultivation after that. In 1834, it produced 93,746 pounds of sugar but in its last year, it produced only 2400 pounds.

The Withdrawal of Labour from a Selection of Estates in St. Vincent.

	New Adelphi	Belle- view	Colon- vale	Dumbarton	Grand Sable	Yambou Vale	Mt Bentwick	Langley Park	Union	Cane Hall	Cane Garden	Wallibou	Richmond	Belmont	Island Total
Acres	642	Not stated	467	224	1600	300	750	600	206	172	82	500	256	256	
1834	145	139	273	114	578	105	251	255	142	139	71	165	284	104	14441
1838	127	122	244	48	483	60	250	229	108	120	65	132	253	64	10946
1839	112	70	136	48	300	65	143	170	38	50	34	90	167	42	8127
1841	98	67	220	56	255	58	142	150	47	50	40	87	155		7977
1842	90	71	105	58	200		112	125	51	60	34	73	166	27	6895
1843	80	71	120	53	200	64	93	150	55	80	38	75	170		6732
1844	87	69	103		200	60	90	115	50	68	36	85	165	14	6619
1845	87	62	81	50	206	66	100	121	45	70	36	71	165	7	6663
1846	87	80	113	51	219	65	100	134	48	72	45	67	165		6608
1847	100	80	74	48	214	40	98	123	45	82	43	61	150		6773
1848	80	97	100	34	262	50	128	148	43	69	44	63	140		6079
1849		90	65	38	249	50	108	150	49	54	50	50	130		5710
1850	54	73	76	40	251	60	97	140		60		65	140		6170
1851	96	100	85	80	273	56	145	150	45			70	150		5756
1852	102	80	118	50	264	66	180	135	40			64	152		5768
1853	95	80	106		282										

Source: The Estate Book of St. Vincent

Appendix Three.

The following tables contain information taken from the Deeds for St. Vincent from 1839 to 1865. The plot sizes and prices for land in Victoria are fairly typical for the island as a whole, with the exception of the sale of a small plot for \$500. This was far more expensive than other plots in Victoria and land in other villages, and it compares more with land prices in Kingstown. It is possible that the deeds contained a clerical error, and the plot was actually either much cheaper, or much larger. However, it is also possible that the price also included buildings or that the plot was in a prime location. It was described as plot 2.

The second table reveals the small number of people who actually managed to buy plots of one or more acres. It is possible that there were other sales in deeds which have not survived, and that more people than the few listed here became small holders. However, the Royal Commission Report into poverty in the Caribbean, printed in 1898, also revealed the insignificant number of small holdings throughout the island in 1897.(1)

The third table shows the total size and costs of rural land sales to labourers. It does not include sales in Kingstown, or those which were only partly recorded in the deed. These figures do not disclose the full extent of land bought by labourers, but they do indicate the large sums of money expended on such a small quantity of land.

(1) PP, 1898, (39) 11.1 Royal Commission Report, p. 93.

Original Land Sales for Victoria Village.

BUYER	SEX	SIZE	PRICE	YEAR
JOHN AMBROSE	M	2430	\$112.00	1853
JOE AND WIFE JOSEPH	B	3168	\$500.00	1850
IAN RICHARD	M	7260	\$26.66	1843
ASHTON YAMIE	M	7260	\$26.66	1843
PHILIP YAMIE	M	7260	\$26.66	1843
AMELIA MCLEOD	F	7260	\$26.58	1843
BEN MCLEOD	M	7260	\$26.58	1843
WILL MCLEOD	M	7260	\$26.58	1843
CHARLES MT.PLEASANT	M	10890	\$39.20	1843
MARY WYLLIE	F	10890	\$40.00	1843
PRIMUS BOLTON	M	10890	\$40.00	1843
MUNRO BACCHUS	M	10890	\$72.00	1843
ROBERT TAYLOR	M	10890	\$40.00	1843
KINGSTON CAMPBELL	M	10890	\$39.20	1843
CORDELIA BEN	F	10890	\$19.98	1843
ANTWIN JIM	M	10890	\$40.00	1843
JERRY PALLAS	M	10890	\$39.20	1843
QUONI THOMAS	M	10890	\$39.20	1843
JOHN L CAMPBELL	M	10890	\$39.20	1843
KINGSTON BEN	M	10890	\$39.20	1843
TOMA CHANCELLOR	M	10890	\$72.00	1843
QUASHIE GEORGE	M	10890	\$39.20	1843
WALLEN JOSEPH	M	13137	\$48.03	1843
ALEX DOUGLAS	M	13137	\$48.03	1843
CHARLES ALEXI	M	21251	\$72.40	1843
JACK STRAW	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
EDMOND MINGO	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
FREEMAN ROBIN	M	21780	\$50.59	1843
JOHNSON MCDOWAL	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
WILLIAM BONNEY	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
MOSES LEWIS	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
CUDJOE ESLIE	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
ESUS JIM	M	21780	\$50.59	1843
JOHN MCLEOD	M	21780	\$79.76	1843
CRUIKSHANK GLASGOW	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
LOCKLAN CAMPBELL	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
JAMES WILKES	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
ANDREW WILKES	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
POLLY SIMON	F	21780	\$80.00	1843
RODNEY YAMIE	M	21780	\$78.40	1843
ALICK JACK	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
DUNDAS WARNER	M	21780	\$39.96	1843
RODNEY BEN	M	21780	\$59.18	1843
ANDREW BRISTOL	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
DICK RICHARD	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
SANCHO ANTWINE	M	21780	\$80.00	1843
CUFFY CAMPBELL	M	32670	\$119.20	1843
SMART LOUIS	M	32670	\$119.20	1843
SOPPY MASON	F	40500	\$148.76	1843
PROVIDENCE DICK	M	43560	\$160.00	1843
HARRY CHANCELLOR	M	43560	\$144.00	1843
ROGER SIMPSON	M	43560	\$160.00	1843
JACOB GESTRIAN	M	43560	\$128.00	1843

Area quoted in square feet, 43560 square feet is one acre
Source: Deeds, 1843-1844, 1850-1857.

Land Sales of over one Acre, 1839-1865.

BUYER	SEX	LOCATION	PARISH	SIZE	PRICE	YEAR
FORTUNE , FRANCES BROWN	B	CLARE VALLEY	ST PATRICK	43560	\$144.00	1851
JAMES,ISABELLA MCGOURNE	B	W. HARMONY	ST GEORGE	65340	\$288.00	1847
ROSA BOOTH	F	NORTH UNION	CHARLOTTE	55760	\$100.00	1847
MARY QUESTEL	F	CLARE VALLEY	ST PATRICK	43600	\$212.00	1851
JOAN HUMPHRY	F	MASSARICAW	CHARLOTTE	89136	\$324.00	1850
FRANCES MORGAN	F	WOURAWARA	ST GEORGE	43560	\$31.92	1843
CATHERINE BROWN	F	HAMILTON	BEQUIA	88750	\$240.00	1854
CATHERINE PLACID	F	GOMIERS	ST GEORGE	43560	\$160.00	1846
BETSY SAMPSON	F	GOMIERS	CHARLOTTE	43560	\$160.00	1851
ROGER SIMPSON	M	VICTORIA	ST GEORGE	43560	\$160.00	1843
JOSEPH MANS	M	GOMIERS	CHARLOTTE	43560	\$120.00	1852
JAMES CRAIGAN	M	CLARE VALLEY	ST PATRICK	46372	\$241.00	1851
PRINCE LENNAN	M	GOMIERS	ST GEORGE	65340	\$240.00	1850
ANTHONY MONTRIE	M	GOMIERS	ST GEORGE	87120	\$320.00	1850
JACOB GESTRIAN	M	VICTORIA	ST GEORGE	43560	\$128.00	1843
WILLIAM BRUCE	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	43560	\$104.00	1852
TODD PRINCE	M	GOMIERS	ST GEORGE	43560	\$160.00	1846
MICHAEL AUSTIN	M	WOURAWARA	ST GEORGE	43560	\$40.00	1843
WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM	M	WOURAWARA	ST GEORGE	108900	\$85.20	1843
PIERRE DICK	M	WOURAWARA	ST GEORGE	152460	\$112.00	1843
GEORGE BAKER	M	WOURAWARA	ST GEORGE	65340	\$48.00	1843
JAMES BIRD	M	MONTROSE	ST ANDREW	217800	\$1,152.00	1840
EVON STEPHENS	M	FRASER	ST DAVID	304920	\$1,728.00	1840
JOE ADAMS	M	FRASER	ST DAVID	392040	\$1,440.00	1840
PROVIDENCE DICK	M	VICTORIA	ST GEORGE	43560	\$160.00	1843
HARRY CHANCELLOR	M	VICTORIA	ST GEORGE	43560	\$144.00	1843
BEN MCLEOD	M	GLAMORGAN	ST GEORGE	54450	\$175.00	1847
JAMES FYFE	M	MT GODDING	ST ANDREW	87120	\$440.00	1847
WILLIAM HYNES	M	MT GODDING	ST ANDREW	54450	\$288.00	1856
PATRICK SYMON	M	N. UNION	CHARLOTTE	116740	\$412.00	1852
WILLIAM LAUGHEED	M	N. UNION	CHARLOTTE	175416	\$295.00	1850
PICTON ISAAC	M	FRIENDSHIP FARM	ST DAVID	108900	\$60.00	1852
MARK SANDY	M	FRIENDSHIP FARM	ST DAVID	87120	\$62.00	1852
MOSES COLLIS	M	FRIENDSHIP FARM	ST DAVID	43560	\$56.00	1852
DUNCAN MCLEAN	M	MILLERS RIDGE	ST GEORGE	87120	\$186.94	1852
SANDY ADAMS	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	43560	\$104.00	1842
CHARLES DAVY	M	CLIFF COTTAGE	CHARLOTTE	87120	\$1,000.00	1854
THOMAS SLATER	M	CLARE VALLEY	ST PATRICK	54450	\$198.00	1848
JOHN BAILEY	M	UNIONVILLE	CHARLOTTE	43560	\$760.00	1853
JOHN ALEXIS	M	HAMILTON WOOD	ST GEORGE	43560	\$40.00	1850
BUCK CAMPBELL	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	87120	\$208.00	1852
JOHN PETERS	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	87120	\$208.00	1852
DUNCAN ADAMS	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	87120	\$208.00	1852
PHILIP SAM	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	87120	\$208.00	1852
TONY JOSEPH	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	76230	\$182.00	1852
WILLIAM HARRY	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	130950	\$315.00	1852
JOHN TRUMPET	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	218250	\$531.00	1852
EDWARD CLUKIN	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	76230	\$184.00	1852
WILLIAM RICHMOND	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	76230	\$184.00	1852
DOVER ADAMS	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	43560	\$104.00	1852
JOHN ABRAHAM	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	43560	\$104.00	1852
TOBY NICHOLAS	M	RIVULET	CHARLOTTE	43560	\$104.00	1852
GEORGE GRIFFIN	M	CAREER	CHARLOTTE	87750	\$921.60	1854

Source: Deeds, 1839-1865

(all sizes quoted in square feet: 43560 square feet is one acre.

Land Bought by Labourers from 1838 to 1865.

PARISH	Total area of land	Total price
BEQUIA	197250	\$995.00
CHARLOTTE	4215335	\$23,998.38
ST ANDREW *	504207	\$6,685.04
ST DAVID	936540	\$3,346.00
ST GEORGE *	2541253	\$13,521.72
ST PATRICK	458951	\$7,396.50

* excluding Kingstown.
Area quoted in square feet, 43560 square feet is one acre..
Source: Deeds, 1839-1865.

Appendix Four.

The following table lists the punishments originally handed out to those convicted after the 1862 riots. The details were taken from both the Colonial Office dispatches and the local Court House records. In fact, many of those imprisoned, including all the women, were released after three months. All the prisoners except Perry and Hill were freed before the end of 1864.

The table shows the wide disparity between male and female punishments, as well as the lack of consistency in general.

Sentences of Convicted Prisoners in the Aftermath of the 1862 Riots.

Name	Offence	Sentence
William Sinclair	not stated	15 months hard labour
Hector Clarke	not stated	8 months hard labour
Richard James	breaking into shop	2 years hard labour, 3 public floggings of 39 lashes
Jacob James	breaking into shop	2 years hard labour, 3 public floggings of 39 lashes
William Walker	larceny, breaking into a house	4 years hard labour, 6 public floggings of 39 lashes
Charles Jack Snr.	larceny	2 years hard labour, 3 public floggings of 39 lashes
Thomas Johnson	larceny	2 years hard labour, 3 public floggings of 39 lashes
Isaiah Timothy	breaking into shop	2 years hard labour, 3 public floggings of 39 lashes
Charles Jack Jnr.	larceny	public flogging of 39 lashes
Jeffrey Agall	larceny	2 years hard labour and 2 public floggings of 39 lashes
William Thomas	larceny and breaking into house	4 years hard labour and 3 public floggings of 39 lashes
Quaco John	larceny, breaking into house, riot	4 years hard labour and 3 public floggings of 39 lashes
Venus Fraser	larceny, breaking into house, riot	18 months hard labour
Polly Moore	larceny, breaking into house, riot	18 months hard labour
Francinette Noel	larceny, breaking into house, riot	18 months hard labour
Joseph Knight	larceny, breaking into house, riot	4 years hard labour 3 public floggings of 39 lashes
Cato Thomas	larceny, breaking into house, riot	4 years hard labour 5 public floggings of 39 lashes
Richard Davis	breaking into house	2 years hard labour and 1 public flogging of 39 lashes
William Pope	larceny, breaking into house, riot	2 years hard labour and 3 public floggings of 39 lashes
Rebecca Paris	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
Susannah John	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
Queen James	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
Jane James	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
Alexander Blair	breaking into house	2 years hard labour 1 public flogging of 39 lashes
Benjamin Bramble	breaking into shop	2 years hard labour 1 public flogging of 39 lashes
Ned Hector	breaking into shop	2 years hard labour 1 public flogging of 39 lashes
Elsy Noel	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
Jane Bartholemew	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
Sarah Jerome	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
John Antoine	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
Rebecca Benji	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
Madeline Sam	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
Charles Sam	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
Abraham York	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
Luke George	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour
Jack McLean	larceny	2 years hard labour and 1 public flogging of 39 lashes
Fox Archibald	larceny	4 years hard labour and 6 public floggings of 39 lashes
James Heyward	larceny	2.5 Years hard labour
Peter Joseph	larceny	18 months hard labour

Alexander Blair	larceny and assault	Remanded	
Eliza Hobson	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Jane James	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Catherine Heyward	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Penny Johnson	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Lavinia Calderia	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Mopsey Job	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Angelique Primus	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Judy Jordan	breaking into house	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Richard Callunder	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Ed Roberts	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Grecian John	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
John Baptiste	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Isaac Collymore	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Samuel Moore	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Thomas Clarke	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Charles Hamilton	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Moses Julien	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
John Emanuel	not stated	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
Pompey Shallows	larceny and breaking into shop	2 years hard labour and 1 public flogging of 39 lashes	
Romeo Dick	larceny and breaking into shop	2 years hard labour and 3 public floggings of 39 lashes	
Sandy Edwards	breaking into shop	1 year hard labour and 2 public floggings of 39 lashes	
George Blackman	larceny	4 years hard labour and 4 public floggings of 39 lashes	
Timothy Heywood	larceny and assault	2 years hard labour, 1 public flog of 39 lashes 2 months solitary each year	
Abel Maynard	larceny and assault	4 years hard labour, 2 public flogs of 39 lashes 2 months solitary each year	
Frank Trudge	larceny and assault	4 years hard labour, 3 public flogs of 39 lashes 2 months solitary for 3 years	
Daniel Liberty	larceny	18 months hard labour and 1 public flogging of 39 lashes	
Bacchus Duncan	larceny	18 months hard labour and 1 public flogging of 39 lashes	
Thomas	larceny	18 months hard labour and 1 public flogging of 39 lashes	
John Sharp	larceny	£10 recognizance for good behaviour	
James Hooper	larceny	2 years hard labour and 2 public floggings of 39 lashes	
Samuel Hillock	breaking into house and assault	5 years hard labour, 3 public flogs of 39 lashes 3 months solitary for 3 years	
Charles Williams	larceny and assault	5 years hard labour, 3 public flogs of 39 lashes 3 months solitary for 3 years	
Jacob Butte	larceny and assault	4 years hard labour and 6 public floggings of 39 lashes	
Frank Cattle	larceny	4 years hard labour and 6 public floggings of 39 lashes	
Fisher Fortune	larceny and assault	7 years hard labour, 6 public flogs of 39 lashes, 3 months solitary for 3 years	
Alex James	larceny and assault	5 years hard labour, 3 public flogs of 39 lashes, 3 months solitary for 3 years	
Jack Sober	larceny and assault	5 years hard labour, 3 public flogs of 39 lashes, 3 months solitary for 3 years	
Dick Jordan	larceny and assault	5 years hard labour, 3 public flogs of 39 lashes, 3 months solitary for 3 years	
Allan Fidler	larceny	6 months in goal	

Grecian Moses	larceny	18 months hard labour and 2 public floggings of 39 lashes
John Francois	larceny and assault	5 yeard hard labour, 2 public flogs of 39 lashes, 3 months solitary for 3 years
Frank Jacob	larceny	1 year hard labour and 1 public flogging of 39 lashes
Aberdeen Jacob	larceny and assault	6 years hard labour 5 public flogs of 39 lashes, 3 months solitary for 3 years
Quashie John	breaking into house and assault	4 years hard labour and 3 public floggings of 39 lashes
Stratford Thomas	breaking into house	6 months hard labour
Ottley France	breaking into house	6 months hard labour
David Boyd	assault	6 months hard labour
Homer Hunter	larceny	private flogging of 39 lashes
Venus France		£10. 9s. 6d recognizance for good behaviour
R. Blair		£10. 9s. 6d recognizance for good behaviour
James Perry	breaking into house, stealing,	8.5 years hard labour, 6 public flogs of 39 lashes, 3 mths solitary, £20 fine
Phillip Goliath	arson, assault and riot	7 years hard labour, 3 months solitary for 3 years and £10 fine
Charles Cuvillie	arson, assault and riot	7 years hard labour, 3 months solitary for 3 years and £10 fine
George Bascom	arson, assault, demanding goods	8 years hard labour, 3 months solitary for 3 years and £50 fine
George Geddings	arson, assault and riot	5 years hard labour, £10 fine
Simon Hill	Incitement to riot	2 years in gaol and 3 months solitary each year
Richard Homer	larceny	2 years hard labour, 3 public floggings of 39 lashes
Hector Homer	breaking into shop	2 years hard labour, 3 public floggings of 39 lashes
Abraham York	larceny	discharged
William Sam	arson	whipped on estate and discharged
Henry Knight	arson, assault and riot	5 years hard labour, 3 months solitary for 3 years and £10 fine
George Romeo	arson, assault and riot	5 years hard labour . 3 months solitary for 3 year and £10 fine
William Sandiford	arson, assault and riot	5 years hard labour, 3 months solitary for 3 years and £10 fine
James Daniel	arson and riot	2 years hard labour and £5 fine
Cheesewright	arson and riot	4 years hard labour
Abraham Ned	arson assault and riot	4 years hard labour
William Homer	arson	3 years hard labour, 3 months solitary each year and £10 fine
Sina Jack	breaking into house	1 year hard labour
Stewart Jack	arson, assault and riot	6 years hard labour, 3 months solitary for 3 years and £5 fine
Joseph McAlister	arson, assault and riot	5 years hard labour, 3 months solitary for 3 years and £5 fine
Samuel Crawford	arson, assault and riot	5 years hard labour, 3 months solitary for 3 years and £5 fine
Edward Thompson	arson, assault and riot	5 years hard labour 3 months solitary for 3 years and £5 fine
Rodney Campbell	arson, assault and riot	3 years hard labour and £5 fine
John Hepburn	arson, assault and riot	3 years hard labour

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